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THE MAGAZINE THAT ENTERTAINS

E, 1919

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AINSLIE'S

The Magazine That Entertains

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CHAPTER I.

LOLITA, why dost thou always run away from me?" The boy's voice came in a hoarse whisper.

The girl leaned far over the banisters, her dusky curls making a curtain for her impish, peering face.

"Perhaps it is that I do not like thee," she replied, and set one tiny bare foot upon the step above her, ready for flight.

But the boy was too quick for her. Leaping, like a young panther, into the air, he caught the end of one dangling curl and held her fast, with her face drawn down several inches nearer to his own.

"Let me go, Raoul!" she begged. "Thou'rt hurting me! In an instant, I shall scream!"

"Last year we played together—and every year before that, whenever we came here in the month before the carnival. And thou wert willing enough. It is only now. Then thou wouldst coax to be taken, when Tonio and I went out in the boat. We are cousins still. What's come over thee?" questioned the boy, clinging to the curl and staring upward with an eager, burning gaze of which he was himself unaware.

"Last year I had to plead to go. Thou didst not, as now, forever chase

Lolita

By Vennette Herron

Author of "When Sirens Clash,"
"The Weaving of the Spell," etc.

and tease me. Loose my hair—or I shall call *mamá!*"

Lolita gave a vicious tug, her slender brown hand clasped tightly around the lock; but the boy held on.

Through all the big, rambling wooden house sounded bustle and clatter—the slamming of doors, the chinking of china, the shrill chatter of servants, the wailing of infants, the laughter of men, and the staccato, birdlike chirpings of many gossiping women; for no less than sixty members of the house of Amado had gathered under this hospitable roof for their annual family reunion, while thirty servants, brought together from the various ménages of the clan, ministered to their wants. In spite of this, however, the boy and girl in the hall stood for a moment within a pool of silence, unobserved and isolated amid the passing clamor, like two lovers at a central table in a crowded café.

"Let me go, Raoul!" demanded Lolita again. "*Mamá* say that I am now too old to play with boys. We'll both be punished if she sees us. What dost thou want with me?"

"I don't know," replied her cousin, laughing and troubled, "but it is somehow—provoking—to see thee forever fleeing. When thou art in Panama, I do not expect to talk with thee; thou

art so guarded in my uncle's house. But here in the savannas, they have always left us free. We are so many. Only this year——"

"Raoul, Raoul, the wind is rising! Fetch thy kite and come along!"

Half a dozen lads, ranging from five to fourteen years, streamed through the broad, bare corridor, each one bearing a bright-colored, long-tailed, elaborately shaped kite.

"I'm coming—go on!" urged Raoul impatiently. He released his grasp on the curl at the approach of the other youngsters, and Lolita hastily ascended a step or two and there remained, poised like a bird, yet lingering for developments.

"Wilt come out to watch them? I will make mine scroll thy name in the air," the boy went on, offering an inducement much coveted among the girls.

But Lolita's answer was disconcerting.

"Canst thou not see," pouted the pretty child, "that I am growing up—and that it no longer amuses me to watch the kites?"

"If thou art indeed so grown up, perhaps it might amuse thee to be kissed," and Raoul swung around the newel post and planted his own feet upon the stairs. His intention was to dash on, yet something dragged at his ankles and kept him hesitant.

The girl soared higher a step or two; then paused, seeing that Raoul came slowly and with his purpose but half fixed. Like two wild, bright-eyed squirrels, they gazed at each other curiously—thrilled, alert, expectant, yet fearful and uncomprehending of the turn their talk had taken. The girl giggled nervously, eyes overflowing with mischief and with coquetry, slumbering, but stretching. Then, suddenly, she broke and ran, scurrying upward, away from—she knew not what.

Like a dog electrified into action by

the chance dart of a cat, the boy sprang after her, intent for the moment upon the chase, with all else pushed from his mind.

Through the upper hall Lolita sped—up steps, down steps, into this room and into that, seeking everywhere a shelter and finding none, bumping into people, who, not noticing that there were but two, made way for the children at their game—and came to bay at last in a cluttered storeroom at the back of the house.

Hot upon the trail, Raoul plunged after her, dodging among stacked trunks and boxes and pieces of broken furniture until he finally caught and held her—a warm, panting bundle of torn pink muslin, tangled in a smother of dusty curls. Excited to boldness, as if parting some bushes to enter a garden, he brushed the hair from her face and pressed his ardent, ignorant, full, boy's lips to hers.

They had kissed, as children, the year before, but this was something new—a commingling of pleasure and pain. Alike embarrassed and by mutual consent, they drew apart. Tears came into Lolita's eyes.

"It must have been for that, Raoul," she reproached him wonderingly, "that *mi madre* told me I must no longer play with thee and the others."

"If any of them trouble thee, tell me. I will beat them well!" declared the boy passionately and drawing himself erect, a very straight and slim and stern protector.

Fickle as a feather, Lolita giggled.

"And who is to beat thee, Raoul?" she queried.

Slyly they scanned each other and smiled.

"Thou didst not dislike it so greatly, Lolita?" The kindled, handsome, boyish face was audaciously appealing.

"From this window, one can see the kites," announced the girl, as if it were a tremendous discovery, while she

stepped over to the casement and peered out.

Her cousin joined her, and they stood together, looking down.

Below them lay a broad, rolling savanna, billowing out indefinitely along the villa-lined road and, beyond that, toward the sea, but bounded on the rear, behind the vine-clad house, by the ever-encroaching jungle, held in check by a tiny river and guarded by an advance line of coconut palms. In the field—beside the low-spreading, screened-in verandas, shaded by coral blooms and flaming acacia flowers in clashing concord—a dozen children dashed here and there, weaving their paper birds and dragons in and out and tracing, with marvelous skill, intricate patterns upon the clean blue slate of the sky. The spectacle fascinated even the two adventurers in the storeroom, high above.

"Look—look at Tonio! He is cleverer than thee, Raoul. See how he manipulates! What a perfect figure eight!"

"That's nothing!" boasted Raoul. "I said I would write thy name, and this afternoon I will." Experimentally, he slipped an arm around the waist of the girl, who trembled at the contact, while pretending not to be conscious of it. "It is pleasant here. We might come—sometimes—to talk together?" he ventured further.

"'Tis a dusty place!" retorted Lolita, shaking her curls.

"Wilt thou go with me into the woods—to look for orchids—after *almuerzo*, as we used to do?" the boy suggested next.

"It is different now. Last year we were permitted—there were so many of us always. Perhaps, if Carmen and Tonio and Ernesto and——"

"No, no! Let us go alone! I know where there is one that is more fragrant than anything thou hast ever smelt. It is so sweet it makes one

drunk and drowsy. It hangs very, very high, yet, if thou wilt come, I will climb after it and pluck it down for thee. Is it necessary always to tell thy *mamá* where thou goest?"

"But, after the siesta, they will dress me in white organdie, and my blue sash, ready to drive, and I dare not run away. Thou art forgetting that I am now of an age to behave with propriety."

"After dinner then. There will be a moon to-night. When all are dancing on the gallery—wilt thou come with me?"

"Where to, stupid boy? We can not go into the woods at night."

"No, but we could sit in the pavilion on the hill. No one goes there now—since Amelia married and went away."

"Used Amelia to go there? Why—and with whom?"

"Every night. We knew—I and the other boys—but we never told. On the last evening, even—before her marriage. She cried so hard—and I heard her tell Ricardo——"

"But Ricardo is not her husband!"

"Of course not, silly, but it was Ricardo whom she loved. To-night I will tell thee all I know about it."

"I do not want to go to the pavilion, Raoul. Why shouldst thou wish me to! It will be damp and full of mosquitoes. It is a foolish thing to do."

"Not with the wind as it is—and I will tell thee the story of Amelia. And then—perhaps—I will kiss thee once more. There is no harm in that."

"Lolita—Lolita—where art thou, child? It is time for *almuerzo*. I must wash thy face and brush thy hair. *Caramba*, where has the *niña* gone?"

"It's Ignacia calling. *Ay*, what shall I do? If she should find me!"

The girl would have flurried away in a panic, but Raoul caught her in his strong young arms and laid a hand upon her mouth.

"Be still!" he hissed. "She'll never think of looking here!"

And he was right, for the querulous voice of the old nurse passed and re-passed and was lost in distant confusion.

"Let me go! I must go!" gasped Lolita, struggling frantically in the arms of her captor.

"When thou hast promised to meet me to-night," conditioned the conqueror.

"But I don't want to, Raoul. Why should I?"

"Thou didst not want to be kissed, but art thou unhappy now?"

"I don't know. Let me free and I will answer thee."

"Thou wilt come?" It was the boy's first triumph, and he would not relinquish it.

"If I can—if I'm not too frightened."

Flushed and guilty-faced—two children smeared with the juice of forbidden jam—they emerged from their hiding place and melted into the throng, en route for the dining room.

The midday breakfast in this, the summer home of the head of the house of Amado, was a feast and a ceremony, peculiarly characteristic of the best which the new little country, chipped, like a bite of biscuit, from the territory of Colombia, had to offer. It began with a thick soup, or *sancocho*, and ran the gamut of eggs, rice, fish, kidneys, chickens, and beef, served in individual courses, washed down with almost as many brands of wine, and topped off with at least seven kinds of *dulces* and cheeses. The partakers sat at two long, patriarchal tables—the adults at one, and the children, with their nurses, at the other—while all were served by barefooted, calico-jacketed, or white-coated men and maids, who not infrequently joined, unrebuffed, in the conversation of their masters.

Lolita, a very demure and velvet-

eyed bud, sat at the foot of the children's table, while Raoul, seated at some distance from her and properly famished after the man's work of the morning, kept his attention fixed upon his plate.

Talk at the larger table—carried on between gulps, for the Panamanian is an enthusiastic eater and drinker—consisted almost entirely of personal gossip.

"Have you ordered Carmen's costume for the next masquerade? What a trial it is to have a daughter! Ramona does not give me a moment's peace." Placidly Señora Garcia adjusted the many bracelets upon her fat arms and again took up her fork. "She insists now upon having slippers made to match each gown, and she has already nineteen pairs."

"It is absolutely essential before the next election, *mi amigo*. No plum like that should be left for an outsider to snatch up. Try to obtain an interview with Fernandez on Thursday. Perhaps—" Señor Amado's suave, incisive voice sank and was drowned in the sea of sound.

"So Amelia's baby has arrived, and she and her husband are reconciled at last? What a blessing! Although I don't think that any one, outside of the family, suspected." It was a very stout, gray-haired woman, in a ruffled black muslin jacket, who spoke. "And now that Ricardo's gone to France—"

"Si; we've decided upon England finally. Señor Ibañez did consider the States, but they give girls too much freedom there. They come back stuffed with strange ideas. It doesn't matter so much for a boy, but Lolita's wild enough as it is." Señora Amado-Ibañez cast a hasty glance at her offspring and, seeing the girl apparently absorbed in the chatter of her companions, continued, "Of course, if she were to marry an American— But there's no guarantee that she will, and

such an education would completely spoil her life in Panama; while in England they're fairly conservative."

"She's so pretty, you'd better get her away quickly if you want to save her for a foreigner," prompted Señora García, rattling her bangles.

"Well," the mother of Lolita defended her course, "you must admit that it would give her more opportunity. And now that there are so many officers here and so many legations——"

"And in consideration of the fact that she'll have a *dot* of fifty thousand dollars—if she marries the right man," added Señor Ibañez. "This country is very young, but its opportunities, at the present time, are manifold; and in forming advantageous affiliations, a pretty, properly educated daughter——"

The family smiled and approved.

"But when does she start? With so many boys about—and Heaven knows we've none of us ever been noted for cold-bloodedness!"

This, from a thin-lipped, sharp-eyed spinster, sent a titter around the board. The speaker bore it well, however, secure in the private knowledge of her own not too hopelessly uneventful past.

"The child is never out of my sight—except when she's with Ignacia," protested Señora Ibañez, "and we're sending her next week. I couldn't have her ready before. *Pobrecita niña*, we've never been separated, and she's such a spoiled pet—being the only one."

"Three daughters are all very well, but they triple one's responsibilities. Now Carmen——"

The exposition of another of the plump Amado wives was cut short by the rising of the host; after which, with leisurely, well-fed deliberateness, the assembly broke and scattered, each individual to seek a favorite couch or

hammock wherein to enjoy to the utmost the usual early-afternoon repose.

Even the children drooped and grew still in the stifling heat. Like the court of the sleeping beauty, the entire house was wrapped in somnolence, while all of its inmates drowsed—all, that is, except one slip of a girl, who stole out, light-footed and unobserved, and one slender brown youth, who followed quickly after her.

Lolita neither paused nor looked around until she reached the tiny bridge that spanned the creek behind the house. There she stopped and, propping her elbows upon the bamboo rail, cupped her chin in her palms. In an instant, Raoul came up to her. Taking his presence for granted, she spoke hastily and with a quaver in her voice:

"Didn't thou hear what they said? I pretended to be talking, but I was listening. They have never told me—not a word—but they're going to send me away—to England—next week!"

"Dost thou want to go?"

"I don't know. I'm terribly frightened, and I can't tell whether I'm sorry or glad."

"Let's walk a little farther. It doesn't matter so much, now, what thou dost. They're going to send thee anyway. I'm sorry, Lolita."

Hand in hand, the children stepped into the jungle, treading a tiny, overgrown trail that they had discovered some years before. Above their heads, the overlapping palm leaves formed a roof of vaulted emerald. From beneath their feet arose an enveloping, pale-green, scented steam. It was the first time that they had ever been thus alone together.

The afternoon slipped away, and it was dusk when the two stood again on the bridge.

"Ay, Raoul—Raoul—what is it? What have we done?" sobbed the girl.

"Don't be frightened, Lolita. As soon as thou art back from school, we

will be married," soothed the boy, with his cheek against hers.

"And thou art sure no one can know? They will not punish me?"

"No, no. How often must I tell thee—no one can know, if thou dost not speak. There is no wrong, *chiquita*. All lovers kiss and caress each other. Always and forever thou wilt belong to me. Thou wilt not forget, when thou art far away in England? And I will be waiting for thee. It is only two years, and then thou wilt become my wife."

"What if my father should not consent? He is always saying that I must marry an Englishman or an American."

"But that is impossible—now that thou art mine. Thou wilt come to the pavilion—to-night and every night, so long as thou art here?"

"Yes—no—I am so afraid!"

"I love thee, Lolita."

"I love thee, Raoul."

CHAPTER II.

"Behind thy ear, child—so. There! Thou art still one of us, if thy manners were bought in England and thy frocks in France!" Old Ignacia gave a final touch to the jasmine blossoms tucked among the curls just below the great pearl-studded comb in Lolita's black hair. "And didst thou never grow lonely for thy old nurse? I'll warrant there was no one in Europe could *coiffe* thee more beautifully?" Her tone sounded jealously anxious.

But Lolita's answer was reassuring.

"No one—no one!" she exclaimed, throwing herself impulsively upon the breast of the wrinkled old woman. "And many and many a night—in that school which seemed at first so dismal, but which at the last I learned to love—I cried myself to sleep, wishing for thee. Thou canst not believe how hard it was, in the beginning, to undress myself!"

"There, there, *niña*, do not crush thy gown! Let me smooth that lock." And Ignacia, much gratified, gave the girl a freshing push and a twitch, as one shakes out a rose before pinning it on.

Very like a rose, indeed, Lolita looked, with her petaled layers of pale-pink tulle and the pearls that had been worn by every débutante in her mother's family since her great-great-grand-dame's time.

The two years at an English finishing school had been supplemented by one of travel—with several other girls and under the most careful chaperonage—on the Continent; and now, at seventeen, Lolita had been brought home to play her part in the intrigue and social life of the miniature capital. Upon her slender shoulders rested, as she vaguely realized, the responsibility of furthering some of her father's most ambitious and long-cherished schemes. This realization would not in itself have troubled the light-hearted girl—happily conscious of her own prettiness and thrilled by anticipatory thought of the ball that Señor Ibañez was giving that evening for the purpose of presenting his daughter—had it not been for disturbing complications. But such complications unquestionably existed, and her arrival—only three days before—in Panama had awakened memories that had lain comfortably dormant throughout her *Wanderjahr*.

While Ignacia bustled away to inform the Señora Ibañez that her daughter was duly clad and prepared for inspection, Lolita seated herself before her dressing table and gazed into its mirror as into a crystal, searching her own features for some solution of her future. It was a lovely face that looked back at her—young, glowing, arch, and framed in burnished black, bacchantic curls. The eyes were like black pansies under straight, dark brows; the nose was daintily formed,

with sensitive nostrils; the mouth red, soft and sulky as a crumpled flower; the skin a creamy amber, with a wax-like texture, flushed through with hot swift blood.

For a long time, Lolita stared as if hypnotized, drowning herself in her own reflected eyes; then she drew open a drawer beside her and took from it a diary of gold-tooled leather, silver-clasped—a schoolgirlish, mid-Victorian, quaintly charming *biblot*. Next she rescued from her jewel box, where she had ventured to place it when she had donned her necklace that night, a thin gold chain from which dangled a silver key. With this she unlocked the book, disclosing the fact that its central leaves had been cut away to form a secret box, wherein, like pearls in an oyster, lay a packet of letters, tied together, inevitably, with a pink satin band. From these she selected one at random and began to read the unformed boyish scrawl:

LOLITA MIA: Two months have passed since they sent thee away, and next week I am to sail for the States. Tonio and I are both going to Exeter for a year, and then to Paris. I tried to make it England, but father was set on the States. He's promised me a car, though—a roadster that I can keep at school—so it may not be so bad. Only I wish it were all over—the time, I mean. In two years—when thou comest back—I will be nearly nineteen. My father was no older when he married, so they ought not to object. I miss thee, Lolita—terribly. It was dreadful, those last days in the savannas, after thou wert gone. None of the other girls were pretty like thee, and I was crazy to get back to town, where there is so much more to do to distract one's thoughts.

Thou mayst believe that I was happy when thy last letter came and I knew that all was well with thee. I was so afraid that some one might find thy sash that I scarcely knew what to do—especially as it has thy name embroidered on it. Thou didst not think of that, I suppose. I hid it first in one place and then in another. If I had not sworn to keep it, I would have taken it into the woods and burned it. Still, I am glad that I did not, for when I am away at

school, it will be pleasant to have something of thine with me. In the meantime, I have sealed it up and put it where I am sure it will be safe. Thou wert angry when I would not give it back to thee, for thy dress hung in straight folds like a smock without it. But thou wert so clever and completely fooled old Ignacia by being undressed and asleep in thy bed when she came to clothe thee for dinner.

Thou art not sorry, art thou? It was such a happy week! Nothing will ever be so beautiful as those nights in the pavilion when the others were dancing. No harm is done and, as soon as we are both at home again, I will ask thy father for thee. 'I am lonely, Lolita. Truly I love thee. Try very hard, please, to bribe a servant to mail thy letters outside, and write to me as often as thou canst.

THY RAOUL.

Lolita mechanically refolded the letter and then, hearing no sounds of approach in the corridor, replaced it in the packet and extracted another, which bore a date six months old and which was the last in the pile. It was written in the hand that had grown easy and bold:

MA CHERIE: Paris is gorgeous. I never had such a glorious time in my life, and I hate to go back—although the governor has promised me an apartment of my own and a decent touring car. The old man's growing impatient, and I suppose I'll have to return and try to learn something of his affairs. *La madre* writes that he's not too well.

But Panama will certainly seem dull! French girls are the most fascinating in the world, although the Americans were very free and jolly. Yet I fancy none of them can beat thee, Lolita—if thou art as pretty as thou wert. Art thou?

Of course we are still betrothed, silly child. I would not break my word, would I? I will ask thy father as soon as seems proper after we return, and, since dad has made so much money, he'll probably be willing enough to consent, in spite of his *penchant* for an English or an American son-in-law.

How strange it will be to see each other after these several years! I feel quite excited when I consider it! Dost think that thou canst still love me? As ever, RAOUL.

Dreamily the girl tucked the letters back into their place of concealment, relocked the diary, and put it away.

Her expression was appropriately sentimental and sweet, but the little sigh and the slight shiver with which she closed the drawer were strangely at variance with her look, and the face that, as she turned again to her mirror, floated like a mist between the reflected eyes and her own was not that of her cousin.

A dark face it was, mahogany-hued and stern, but lighted with gray-blue eyes—the most debonaire and gay in the world—which contradicted the down-drooped, stubbornly English mouth. Also, the face swam against a background of tumbling, blue-green sea, and, sitting quietly on her little pink-cushioned, lace-draped bench, Lolita felt the rocking of a great ship, sniffed the tang of salt air, and heard again a crisp, clipped English voice saying:

"I shall be there to greet you, señorita, on the night of your first ball. Do not forget!"

Would he be there? The little adventure that had thrown them together for half an hour had occurred on the very day on which they had sailed into Colon. The confidences had been all on her side, and Lolita did not even know his name.

"Well, Lolita, I'm here at last. How thou art mooning, child! That is no way to look on a night like this. I remember that I was as wild as a witch before my first dance, and running all over the house. Stand up and let me look at thee. We are already late. Maria was so slow—and, at the final moment, found a rent to mend in my train." Señora Ibañez, loquacious and resplendent in black lace and antique, Spanish-set emeralds, surveyed her daughter proudly. "Thou wilt do, I think—but thou art quite pale. I suppose the excitement has been too much for thee. I hope thou'rt not going to tire easily—just now, when we have arranged so many things. A dab of rouge, perhaps— But no; when

one is so young, it is not unbecoming. Ignacia—Maria—our mantles, *pronto!*"

Descending by way of the moonlit and flower-scented patio, and followed by the curious, glittering eyes of the family retainers and their numerous offspring—whose black, woolly heads hung over the encircling gallery rails like so many pods from a vine—the two ladies reached their carriage, where Señor Ibañez had long been awaiting them. The groom, in white linen livery, with black tophat and boots, sprang onto his box, the *cochero* cracked his whip above the splendid span of white-cockaded black horses, and they were off.

Lolita forgot her doubts and fears and was just a thrilled, expectant girl on the way to her first ball. Into the quaint, historical little old city of Panama—with its picturesque, mongrel peasant population and its contrasting score of families who dare to boast of pure Castilian blood and who, thrown into intimate contact, by reason of the canal, with the military and diplomatic representatives of the outside world, live a whimsically pretentious and *opéra-bouffe* sort of existence—Señorita Ibañez, with her new, untried beauty and her father's preëminent wealth, entered like a little princess coming into her own.

Negroes backed against the dirty stucco walls to stare, as she was jolted grandly over the huge, rough cobblestones; children and mangy, prowling, unowned dogs scampered out of the way; Chinamen gaped and grinned from the lantern-hung balconies above their shops; and Spaniards, in scarlet sashes and velvet tam-o'-shanters, rose from their tables before the open-doored *cantinas* and held their glasses aloft, crying, "*Holak!*" and, "*Viva!*" as she passed. It is something to be acclaimed a princess, even though one's kingdom be artificial and small, and the little city, with its legends of lost gold

and its ancient dungeons, towers, and walls, made a not unfitting setting for petty royalty.

Their destination was El Club Union, the club of the conservative, elderly Panamanian, who likes to take his afternoon drink and his game of dominoes amid comfortable surroundings, undisturbed by the slander and chatter of the younger element, emancipated by study and travel from the leisurely elegancies of manner so dear to the heart of the older Latin American. When it came to entertaining, this club was, therefore, the natural choice of Señor Ibañez, whose family was acknowledged to be one of the oldest and richest on the Isthmus, and he had spared no expense in his effort to make the initial appearance of his daughter an impressive one.

The club structure was of white stone, built into two long wings, like arms, opening to the sea and inclosing a triangular court, bounded on the ocean side by an elaborately constructed swimming pool wherein the members might bathe in seclusion and safety. The court was planted with orange and magnolia trees and with jasmine and pink hibiscus shrubs. From the upper gallery—as, also, from the great, flat roof, which was likewise outfitted with awnings, tables, and chairs—it was possible to gaze out over the red-tiled roofs and pointed spires of the city, on the one hand, and, on the other, across the isle-dotted Panama Bay to the shore of Panama Viejo opposite, where the spray dashed high against the rocks that upheld the crumbling tower of San José.

The interior of the club, with its spacious ball, billiard, and supper rooms, was elaborately decorated for the occasion with palm leaves, flowers, vines, and innumerable ribbony tinsel strips, festooned from the chandeliers.

Lolita, flushed now, and with sparkling eyes coquetting behind an enor-

mous, white-plumed fan, stood demurely by the side of her mother, extending a slim little hand, first to this one and then to that, greeting an occasional old friend with a sudden rapturous cry and then subsiding into half-frightened, smiling curtsies.

"Lolita, child, dost remember me?" A very beautiful, very frail, but very skillfully made-up young matron paused before the girl with her two hands outstretched.

"Cousin Amelia!" responded Lolita, with quick, delighted surprise. "It has been—how long?—more than four years, since I have seen thee! I am so glad—so very glad! Didst know that, when I was a little girl, I was forever dreaming of the time when I should be like thee?" she confessed, with shy admiration.

For some unexplained reason, Señora Amado-Elia winced and protested:

"I hope that better and happier dreams will come true for thee. Wilt come to see me soon, *niña*—some afternoon this week?"

"I should like to so much," answered the girl, as Amelia Elia was swept on by the crush.

"Welcome home, Cousin Lolita. May I have a dance?" The voice was cool and carefully casual, yet vibrant with smothered excitement and something else; one might have called it an exultation of relief.

The expected moment had arrived. With difficulty, Lolita raised her eyes. The handsome, black-eyed, perfumed young dandy, in the foppishly cut French clothes, who stood before her was familiar and yet not so. It was hard to recognize in him the graceful, impudent, barefooted boy cousin of more than three years ago. Yet the lithe lines and the audacious, white-toothed smile were the same.

"It is Raoul, is it not?" said the girl, and, with a hand that trembled, she held out to him her tasseled card.

The young man scratched an R in several places upon it, and then, with a courteous word to his aunt and uncle, made way for those who followed him.

The face for which Lolita scanned the throng had not appeared when the receiving line was broken and the dancing began.

First, as always, there was a *contradanza*, the stately measures of which Lolita trod with Pedro Salvador, the son of the president. But the second was a waltz, which brought her into the arms of Raoul. Eager arms they were, too, drawing her closer than the etiquette of the dance demanded.

"Lolita," he whispered ardently, "thou art so beautiful! I have been watching thee ever since I came into the room—watching until I am quite mad! I can not believe that thou art mine, and I can not wait for the time to pass till I may claim thee! I could not dream that thou wouldst return like this! Thou art a princess!"

Half protestingly aloof, yet half yielding, because of her belief in his right to her, Lolita listened to his poured-out torrent of passion. His last words, however, became a challenge.

"Wert waiting, Raoul," she answered, withdrawing herself as much as she might, "to see if I was still pretty enough? Thy last letter reached me six months ago, and I can not recall that it told me I was still loved."

"Ay, *Lolita mia*, do not reproach me! I was a fool. I was having my fling—and it had been so long since I had seen thee. But it all comes back now—and more! *Te amo—te amo!* A girl who gives herself can not change—not a girl like thee. Surely thou must still love me."

The boy was unusually good to look upon, and the quick, tropical ardor so characteristic of his countrymen had been kindled afresh by the beauty of

his cousin and by the sight of the hom-age paid to her.

Lolita wavered. It was pleasant to find herself so coveted by the one to whom she had never ceased to feel herself bound; yet was there a score of grief and anxiety to be paid, and far in the background clung the memory of an English face, with laughing, blue French eyes.

"A girl," she responded, therefore, from behind the barrier of her unfurled fan, "who is forced to feel herself forgotten may force herself to forget."

"*Querida mia*, I was but a boy—and I never really forgot! Is it not, also, more wonderful that I should love thee afresh, and that all of our joy may be lived again, than that I should merely remember a thing that is done? I love thee, Lolita! Say now, as thou didst before, 'I love thee, Raoul.'"

And because they both were young and fair, and because she thought that her love, by right, was his, and because to love is happiness, Lolita opened her lips to obey—and then closed them again. For, looking over the bent shoulder of her cousin, Raoul, she saw the Englishman for whom she had watched standing in converse with her father; and at that very moment, she saw her father glance around the room and, upon catching sight of her, start hastily in her direction, dragging the stranger after him.

Something caught in Lolita's throat, her breath began to come in gasps, and her face was suffused with blushes, while she waited silently. Quite mystified and angry at any interruption, Raoul turned as the two gentlemen approached.

"*Lolita mia*," began Señor Ibañez suavely, "permit me to present Mr. Markham, the new secretary to the British legation. Mr. Markham, my daughter."

Lolita curtsied.

Cecil Markham bowed.

"May I have the honor of the next dance?" he asked, quite coldly and correctly.

"With pleasure," replied Lolita, somewhat faintly, and placed her hand upon his arm.

With great affability, Señor Ibañez turned to Raoul, who stood scowling, with folded arms.

"An auspicious beginning, eh? He's the only son of Sir Barrett Markham, you know."

Raoul's retort was a grunt, which a guest, coming up most opportunely, prevented Señor Ibañez from hearing.

CHAPTER III.

As the city of Panama is built upon a very long, narrow, and pointed peninsula, tipped with the old Chiriqui prison, it is possible for many of the private residences, as well as for most of the public buildings, to overlook the water. This was true of the home of Amelia, Señora Elia. The house, indeed, was fitted snugly into an angle of the ancient wall that once surrounded the city and the remaining portion of which still forms the outer façade of the prison court; so that the servants' quarters and storerooms below, lighted only by small, arched and shuttered openings, were dark and dreary enough, while the family quarters, in the second story, opened onto Las Bovedas, the broad walk at the top of the wall, and were flooded with sunshine and fresh sea air. A narrow gallery, thickly festooned with fragrant flowering vines, surrounded this floor, and from it one could watch the children with their roller skates and the strolling lovers taking their pleasure on the wide white promenade between the grim watchtowers; or one could gaze out, over the blue, sparkling water, to the yachts and the quaint, ribbed Japanese fishing boats rocking before Marino's wharf; or, upward, to the steel-

blue gulls, wheeling and circling above the bay. Along the balcony, at regular intervals, in little hut-shaped bamboo cages, hung tiny blue coral-beaked birds, and wee green parrakeets, which chirped and twittered and shrieked their comment on passing events.

And here, on a lovely, green-gold afternoon, when the water was just beginning to turn from sparkling blue to a rose-streaked mauve, lingered Lolita, clad in pink organdie, with a wide, blue-ribboned leghorn hat tied over her curls, and, beside her, Cecil Markham, in the immaculate white flannels which are permitted at even formal teas in the tropics.

"So you think that you are going to find our little city endurable, in spite of your forebodings? That is very nice, I am sure." Lolita spoke in the prettily accented English which she had acquired at school, idly twirling her pink-ruffled chiffon parasol between its ivory point and her shell-tinted palm.

"My forebodings left me when I learned that it was your home. It was a kind fate that threw you into my arms that last day on the ship. I could almost forgive the swinish haste of the brute on the stairs who caused the accident."

"Had it not been for you, I might have been really hurt! But I was exceedingly wicked to stand so long in that sheltered corner talking to you," laughed Lolita. "*Mi tia* would be furious if she knew. Only I could not resist, because it was the first time that I had ever spoken to a man alone," she added naively.

"And I kept my word—to appear at your first ball."

"But of course, señor," answered the girl merrily. "Only you had to do none of the things which you threatened, to gain admittance. If I had known who you were, I could have told you, then, that you would be invited. You have

come at the right time to find us at our best. From now until after carnival, there will be much gayety. It is always so during the dry season."

"I'm sure these three weeks have been jolly. I wonder would you and your mother drive with me out to that breakfast in the savannas to-morrow?"

"That you will have to ask *mamá*."

"Is it ever possible really to talk to one of you girls alone for a little while here?"

"Are we not alone now, señor?"

"But it is a miracle and bound to dissolve the moment one actually begins to say anything." Cecil Markham tugged nervously at a blossom that had been swaying provocatively against his hand, and embarrassed himself by tearing down a vast length of vine, which caught in the girl's filmy frock. "Oh, I beg your pardon," he muttered, stooping to disentangle the thorns. "Deuced awkward of me!"

Bit by bit, he loosened the clinging thing, while Lolita looked on. Everything that they said and did was astonishingly simple and outwardly insignificant, yet it seemed to both of them that the occasion was momentous—that they were somehow exalted above the rest of human kind and that, in some obscure manner, their trivial words and acts were glorious. In time, the girl stood free, and there followed a pause, no less prescient than their speech had been.

Then, "I suppose I ought to speak to your father first—only—some way—I can't," began Cecil. "You must hear it before any one. I love you. I want— Will you— Surely you understand! Will you marry me?"

The effect upon the girl was strange. She listened at first, leaning forward with parted lips, as if to drink in his words that she had thirsted to hear; then, suddenly, she drew back and became very pale.

"Oh," she cried, "I am sorry—so

sorry! I must not listen to you—but—I forgot!"

"You don't mean," stammered Cecil, "that you can not care? I don't want to seem a conceited ass—I don't know why you should—only—it must be because I want you so much—but I can't help it—somehow I believe that you do. Oh, darling, darling, say you do!"

"You mustn't ask me!" Lolita's voice quivered and her parasol fell unheeded to the ground, while she clasped her hands above her throbbing heart. "I can never tell you! *Ay*, I have been a wicked girl, and this is my punishment! There is a thing which I must beg of you," she went on hurriedly. "Please, please, say nothing of this to my father! He must not know—no one must know—that you have ever wished—that you have asked me! Oh, promise, promise! It means so much to me!"

Piteously they stared at each other, standing straight and still in the rainbow radiance of the descending sun.

"Lolita," answered Cecil Markham, "when I saw you flitting here and there on the great ship, so slender and sweet, I thought that you were the loveliest thing in all the world—and I have seen women in many countries. And when you fell into my arms that day—as lightly as a butterfly falls—it seemed, in that very instant, that I must gather you close and hold you forever and ever. From that moment, you have filled my thoughts and my heart as I had not dreamed a woman could.

"There is in me something—it comes from my beloved French mother, I think—which makes my love different from that of most Englishmen. It is fighting now with the Anglo-Saxon part of me—tearing my heart, telling me to believe only your eyes and to take and hold you against fate and the world. Yet, in spite of that, if you still tell me that it is for your happiness, I will promise anything you may ask." His tone was low and tense, but his hands

made no gesture. No one watching them could have been certain that they were not discussing the weather. "Can you ask me to promise? Can you say that you do not love me?"

The girl swayed, and her hand groped out to the balcony rail.

"Nevertheless," came her answer finally, in a voice determined, yet unsteady, "I must ask you to promise."

"Very well," returned Cecil Markham, as a soldier replies to a command from a superior officer, "I am at your service—now and always. But I will never cease to wait and to hope for you until I know that you actually belong to another."

Meanwhile, inside the quaint little salon—wind-swept, walled with bare, green-painted boards and furnished with a blue-and-gold Louis Quinze drawing-room suite, supplemented by innumerable porcelain knickknacks—Amelia graciously attended to the wants of her guests, filling the cup of Señora Ibañez for the third time with hot tea, instructing the white-jacketed *muchacho* to bring more champagne, with plenty of cracked ice, and keeping a watchful eye upon the two little maids who scuffed clumsily about in straw slippers, bearing trays of excellent sandwiches and multicolored, ornately decorated confections and cakes.

The company, besides the hostess, consisted of Señor Elia, the host, a very dark, plump, walrus-mustachioed man, a good ten years older than his beautiful wife, upon whom he kept his gaze persistently fixed in a curiously scrutinizing and irritating manner; Señor Ibañez and his lady, both complacently conscious of their daughter's success; Señora Garcia, as pompously fat and braceleted as a Roman emperor; Señor Amado and his spouse, the little sharp-eyed, white-haired, quick-tongued grandmother of the clan; and Raoul, who had dropped in casually at breakfast time and wheedled

out of Amelia her permission to remain.

The gravitation of Lolita and the Englishman toward the semiseclusion of the balcony had been noted by the entire assembly and had, indeed, been artfully abetted by all save Amelia, who longed for a confidential talk with the girl before taking a stand, and Raoul, who would have prevented it had he dared, and who, failing that, proceeded to make himself as disturbing as possible by prowling about the room, picking up and setting down first one and then another of the various ornaments and statuettes.

"Raoul," called Señora Amado, exercising her queenly right, "what ails thee, *niño*? Thou'rt acting exactly like a hungry cat. Come and sit by thy grandmother and she will stuff thee with cakes as she used to do. I feel as if something might fall upon my head at any moment while thou art moving about like that!"

Coming from such a source, the words were a command, and the boy subsided into a chair, where he listened, glowering, to the conversation which the others carried on in voices lowered by common consent.

"They've been as inseparable as our conventions could countenance during this entire three weeks. Everything seems to be working out perfectly," sighed Señora Ibañez, folding her hands above her stomach as if to take a well-earned rest.

"Do not forget," Señora Garcia rebuked her sister, "that it was my foresight which gave the affair its beginning. I had discovered, of course, who he was, and that day on the ship—"

"Little minx!" broke in Señor Ibañez proudly. "No one could have imagined, when I presented him, that she had ever seen the man before. She will go far, that girl of mine!"

"I wish thou wouldst not interrupt, *amigo mio*," protested his wife. "Con-

tinue, *Heléne*. Tell us exactly what occurred on the boat. It was nothing conspicuous or compromising, I trust?"

"Scarcely, my dear—while she was in my care?" Señora García raised two jangling hands of horror and then went on serenely, "No, rest assured, Lolita was well guarded. She met no one, and he only stared at her from a polite distance until the final day. That afternoon, having a desire to rest for a time in my cabin, I summoned the girl and then descended ahead of her. I do not know exactly what happened, for I had already passed into the corridor, when I heard a startled exclamation and, looking around, beheld Lolita in the arms of Mr. Markham.

"Obviously there had been an accident of some sort, and my first impulse was to hasten back. But then I saw them separate—with the most proper confusion upon the part of the child—and begin to converse; and it occurred to me that a few moments—while she was so naïve and unspoiled, and with my eye upon them, although of that they were unaware—would do no harm and might not be a bad thing in the end. He being an Englishman, I knew that he would take no advantage—at least, not in so short a time; so I waited, concealed by the shadow of the hall.

"She did not venture to remain long, but I could see that he was greatly intrigued. When she left him, I retreated hastily into my cabin and there reproved her for coming so slowly. A necessity for secrecy on her part would, I knew, be the best way to keep him in her mind. And now you see that I was right."

"It was taking a risk, but it seems to have turned out for the best," admitted the jealous mother, somewhat grudgingly.

But the father of Lolita was frankly cordial about the services of his sister-in-law.

"Thy wit and resource are always

to be depended upon, *Heléne*," he thanked her, "and I am genuinely grateful. I could have planned nothing more fortunate myself than that which fate has brought about. His mother was the Comtesse de Langerais, with the most influential of connections, and his father—Sir Barrett, you know—virtually controls that new company—a tremendous thing. Oil—lumber—mines—everything will fall into their hands—with the pressure which we can bring to bear upon Salvador with regard to the concessions. He knows very well that the next election depends upon us and——"

"There is one point, *mi amigo*——" Señores Amado and Ibañez bent their heads together and dropped into tones inaudible to all save themselves.

"He seems a very charming and cultivated young man, but I should like to be certain that Lolita will be happy." Into the somewhat hectic atmosphere of conspiracy, Amelia's voice swept clean and sweet and purposeful as a fresh breeze blowing into a sultry cave.

"We all want that!" Lolita's mother sprang to her own and the family's defense.

"Hast thou any reason to imagine that she would not be happy in a suitable and well-arranged marriage?" propounded Señor Elia, in a manner that suddenly brought the possibility disagreeably before the minds of his hearers.

There followed a second of strained uncomfortableness; then Amelia did a brave and gracious thing.

"You have not seen the *niño* to-day," she said. "Don't you want to? Raoul, wilt hold the door for me?" and, rising, she left the room.

Señor Elia being providentially called outside at that moment, to give a direction to the *muchacho* concerning the wine, Señora Ibañez leaned over to her sister and spoke in a whisper:

"Just watch her when she returns.

It is plain that she hates the child. It is unnatural, and yet, when one recalls how she was wrapped up in the first and how difficult he made it for her! Undoubtedly he suspected. It's really a blessing that it died. She'll grow fond of this one in time. It's scarcely two months old."

Señora Amado frowned and shook her head at her gossiping daughters—and none too soon, for almost immediately Amelia reentered the room, followed by a barefooted and wrinkled old native nurse, who bore, upon a blue satin pillow, a small, squirming, unwilling mite, clad for inspection in a long white robe, heavily incrustated with lace, exquisite hand embroidery, and wee blue satin bows.

"Bring him to me!" Señora Amado held out the arms that had cradled every Amado child to receive her great-grandson. "He looks more like his father every time I see him!" she declared.

"Yes," responded Amelia, who stood very white and straight, looking down at the pair, "yes, grandmother, that is true."

The infant was passed from hand to hand, and then was restored to its nurse. Not once had Amelia touched it, and not once had Señor Elia removed his eyes from the face of his wife.

At this moment, Lolita and Cecil Markham entered from the gallery. The Englishman paused, somewhat embarrassed by a display to which he was unused, but Lolita—who had not forgotten the customs of her country during her stay abroad, and who was glad to find something that would keep her from becoming the center of attention for a time—came forward eagerly.

"May I hold him, Amelia?" she asked.

Strangely enough, Amelia hesitated a second, and then, for the first time, took up her son and placed him in the arms of the young girl. And as she

did so, she sent an appeal from her great, dark eyes that formed a link of sympathy and understanding between them. Inexplicable and apparently without reason as it was, each felt the bond and was happier for it.

In the general moving about that followed the exit of the infant, Raoul succeeded in the purpose which had been his for the entire afternoon, and drew Lolita out onto the balcony.

While admitting Raoul's claim, the girl went reluctantly back to the spot that seemed to her, now, to be so charged with the pulsations of her own secret emotions that whoever stood there must be made aware of them.

It had grown dark, and there were ever-increasing signs of departure among the guests inside, so that Raoul knew his time to be brief. He determined to make the most of it, however, and began abruptly:

"When may I speak to thy father, Lolita? I can no longer endure to see how he casts thee at the Englishman. Thou knowest well that thou art mine."

"I think, Raoul," replied the girl, with gentle weariness, "that Señor Markham will not trouble thee so much in the future. I—he—has been made to understand that I am not free."

"*Querida mia*, I am so glad!" cried the boy, in an ecstasy of relief. "Thou canst scarcely believe how I have suffered since thy return! And may I speak to thy father now?"

"Not yet, Raoul. If thou goest while his heart is so set upon the Englishman, he may not consent. In a little while, he will see that his wish is of no avail."

"Lolita, thou art not trying to put me off?"

"No, no. I, too, wish him to consent."

"If it comes to the worst, *querida*, we will have to tell him."

"No—not that!" Lolita was trembling

and on the verge of tears, exhausted by the strain of the afternoon. "Anything but that! When he sees his plans fail, he will consent. But we must wait."

"Lolita, I want thee so! I must somehow prove that thou art mine or I shall go mad!"

In truly tropical fashion, the boy's self-control, which had undergone severe tests during the past few weeks, suddenly snapped. He flung himself upon the girl and, holding her crushed against his breast, kissed her eyes, her lips, and her hair.

"Where is Lolita?" Señora Ibañez glanced about the room. "She must have gone onto the balcony. Señor Markham, will you fetch her, please? It is time we were starting."

"Certainly, señora."

Self-consciously and yet glad of a legitimate excuse for intrusion, Cecil stepped through the long French doors.

Amelia, who was engaged in assisting Señora Garcia in the arrangement of her voluminous *manta*, gave a startled exclamation and, with a half-uttered word of apology, hurried after the Englishman.

Thus it was that both rounded the corner of the gallery just in time to see Lolita hang, languid and unresisting, in the embrace of Raoul.

With something like a groan, Cecil turned and reentered the house, while Amelia, with her newly aroused suspicions confirmed, called softly and very kindly through the dark:

"Lolita, child, thy mother waits."

CHAPTER IV.

"Will you take a chance on this?"

"Not in my eyes—oh, please!"

"Caramba—when I catch that boy!"

"Cinco pesos, señor."

"Take a chance on mine."

"No—on mine."

"It is only ten pesos. Buy one from

each of us!" and five distractingly pretty girls, with bare shoulders and billowing skirts, joined hands and danced around Cecil Markham, shrieking with laughter and scattering clouds of ribbons and confetti, winding the Englishman, who stood patiently grinning, with his glass in his eye, in a choking, sandstorm whirl of perfume and paper.

When his purse came into view, however, they stopped, as if at the touch of a magic spring, and five pairs of greedy little hands shot out, while five little crimson mouths opened to haggle and chatter with all of the shrewdness and vim of fishwives on the *playa*.

The *petit carnaval*, the annual fair for the benefit of the *bomberos*, was in full swing. Las Bovedas, the street upon the dungeon-studded, turreted wall, which stretched like a curved dike between the prison pit and the ocean, was lined with gayly decorated booths, like an Eastern midway, and lighted from end to end with strings of electric bulbs and lanterns. Like a gorgeous fire balloon, it hung between the deep blue of sea and sky. Its grim base was blotted out by the blaze, and there remained only a glorified garden of color and light, floating, in transient joyousness, above the sighs of lapping waters and the croonings of thieves and murderers in the darkened depths of the prison court.

The old stone benches against the coping were filled with *dueñas*, black clad and tightly wedged, and with children, forever coming and going, pulling and tugging at their knees. Chic young matrons of Panama presided over the booths, in which were sold sandwiches, *dulces*, drinks, ices, favors, confetti, chances on all sorts of articles from dolls to motor cars, bric-a-brac—all of the usual paraphernalia of a fair. In one corner were little tables, where the men sat chatting, with hands

clapped over their champagne glasses to ward off devastating paper showers.

The *bomberos* themselves, in their flame-red shirts and shiny black helmets, ran here and there, dragging their firemen's apparatus up and down and making themselves generally conspicuous. The pretty girls of the town, wearing *polleras*—full-ruffled native fiesta dresses—with their hair thrust through with artificial flowers, and—some of them—with great wooden trays balanced deftly upon their heads, rushed here and there, vending cigarettes, sweets, and chances of various kinds. These were followed by flocks of boys, taking advantage of their temporary freedom and the mimic warfare of flakes and flowers to come into closer contact with their sweethearts than was ordinarily possible.

The center of the walk was thronged with a great mob of pushing people, laughing, talking, flirting, choking. An incredible amount of confetti was thrown. The stinging stuff was pelted into rosy faces, in spite of protesting, upthrown hands. From every side came sounds of coughing and sputtering. Dozens of little perfume atomizers, too, were busy; tears trickled from smarting eyes, while mouths squealed and smiled and spat confetti. Panamaians and tourists from all over the world, in every sort of costume, waded through drifts of paper snow, their ankles clutched and cloyed by rainbow ribbons. *Serpentinas* dripped, like broken cobwebs, from lamp-posts and wires. The air was dense with fluttering colors. Parties attempted to cling together, broke, and scattered; all were friends and all were revelers.

At either end of the walk, a band crashed continuously, and, whenever and wherever the fancy seized them, couples danced and capered, rioting in each other's arms to the rhythm of merriment. Upon the stroke of every hour, a khaki-garbed guard popped, like

a mechanical toy, out of each sentry box and blew his whistle, thus ringing the court with a wave of sound.

And still, beneath the glittering bubble of evanescent delight, separated by the wall which had withstood the wailings of centuries, the hungry waters sang their siren song, and the prisoners moaned in their trickling, moss-slimed cells.

Even so Lolita—in a pink muslin *pollera*, with roses in her hair and a great tray of lace-frilled boutonnières slung from rose ribbons about her neck—laughed and coquetted and seemed the most carefree of maids, while deep in her heart a tiny bell tolled the knell of happiness.

Like a dawn-flushed butterfly, she flitted here and there, disposing of her wares, returning to her base for fresh supplies, darting back and forth, evading Raoul, who kept as persistently at her shoulder as possible, and hovering on the outer edge of the circle which surrounded Cecil Markham—only to flutter frantically out of reach whenever he attempted to capture her.

Very gallantly had Lolita played her part since the day of Amelia Elia's tea, and the part had been anything but an easy one. Minds bent to their project, Señor and Señora Ibañez had done all that propriety would permit to throw their daughter into the company of the Englishman, who, hurt and mystified as he was, still could not bring himself to refuse the opportunities thus given him of seeing her. There had been a round of breakfasts, teas, dinners, and drives, and not a few balls. The usual cumulative gayety of the Panamanian season—which begins with Christmas and ends with carnival—had been so augmented by the efforts of the *Ibañez*' that Lolita's days passed in a fury of excitement. Like a bobbing cork upon a fountain spray, she was never still and never her own mistress.

Amelia, in her turn, believing that she had discovered a secret similar to her own, and with the kindest intentions in the world, had done all she could to favor the cause of Raoul, with the result that the girl was passed from one to the other of her suitors like a shuttlecock—tantalized by glimpses of content and tortured by the perfection of a love that would have contented had she not glimpsed something else.

The thought habits of her years of girlhood, growing out of her child's secret, bound her to Raoul, while the heart throbs of awakening womanhood beat out the name of the Englishman. Her mind accepted her stated decision as the only possible one, while every nerve in her body rebelled against it and pronounced it a false sacrifice. Had her cousin ceased to desire her, she would probably have gone her way untroubled by moral scruples, neither her temperament nor her environment being conducive to the consideration of such arbitrary abstractions, but against his positive claim, combined with the usual instinct of the modest girl to justify the first gift of herself by making it permanent, she felt herself powerless.

The best that she could do was to store up memories, to keep her semblance of freedom as long as possible, to squeeze dry the color ball of coquetry before descending to the drab monotony of duty. So she danced away the hours, stimulated by the torment which she inflicted upon herself and upon her lovers, giving her days to laughter and her nights to weeping—a bewildered little butterfly, foreseeing winter in the midst of summer sunshine.

"Lolita, *querida*, thou art so lovely to-night! Thine eyes are like black diamonds blazing through the dusk of thy hair. Why art thou always so elusive? It is like the old days, when thou wouldst run from me. Will there ever

come a time when thou wilt say as then, 'I love thee?' Come, sit upon the wall, and I will make a song for thee."

Raoul caught the girl by the hand and drew her down upon the coping, on the side toward the sea. A vine draped the top of the wall, and great clusters of heavily scented yellow blossoms quivered in the warm night breeze. Like a pink bird in its nest, Lolita perched among the flowers, while the handsome boy beside her unslung the riband-hung guitar which is a part of every Panamaian youth's holiday equipment and, touching it lightly, began to sing:

"A white moon burns on the water,
Breaking the blue into gold;
A pink moth flies, with dazzled eyes,
Where silver sails are unrolled.

"My dreams fly after her flitting,
Calling Lolita to me.
The pink moth brings, on rosy wings,
My lost dreams back from the sea."

While Raoul improvised, in liquid Spanish, brushing his instrument every now and again with sympathetic fingers, the tumult of frenzied mirth receded, the night grew suddenly still, the air blew salt off the sea, and Lolita became conscious of blue space and loneliness, and then of the poetic grasping of her mood by another, of the romantic charm in the fervent face of the boy beside her. The woman's eternal longing for peace and protection took possession of her, and she was moved by the ardent verses which sprang so spontaneously to the lips of her tropical lover. Tears filled her eyes.

"Raoul," she said, "thy song is more beautiful than I deserve."

He bent toward her; in another instant, they would have been in each other's arms, with the gap between them bridged by their youth and their common need for love.

And then—just as on the evening of her first ball, when the gates of Lo-

lita's heart had stood ajar for him to enter who would—Cecil Markham stepped forward and closed them in the face of Raoul, who stood with one foot upon the threshold.

"Señorita Ibañez," he said, drawing her clumsily, yet certainly, back into the world in which he himself was a factor, "won't you rescue me from the clutches of your comrades? I ask you—how is it possible for me to carry anything more? And how can I dispose of that which I have already purchased?"

And, with an air of mock dismay, Cecil indicated his bulging pockets, heaped arms, and the favors and baubles with which his entire person was adorned and overloaded.

The moment was shattered; Raoul and Lolita stood gasping—one with anger, and the other with relief—amid a shower of exploded bits of romance and sentimentalism. The boy glared furiously, while the girl trembled a little and gathered up her tray. She had learned much of *savoir-faire* in the trying weeks that had elapsed since her entrance into the social world, and was therefore able to reply, with a fair degree of equanimity:

"I am not a savior, señor, but only another harpy. Behold my wares, which you have not yet patronized."

"Please come and help me to get rid of a little of this truck and protect me from the others, and I'll buy all the flowers you have left. I'm completely tangled—and Señor Amado can afford to be generous. He has monopolized you for half an hour." The last words were snapped out against the will of the speaker.

"That is the privilege of a kinsman, and I can not see——" began Raoul hotly.

But Lolita laid a hand upon his arm. Her heart was singing with the knowledge that Cecil had been watching her.

"I thank thee for thy verses, Raoul,"

she said gently. "A little later thou mayst come to dance with me. For that I am sure thou wilt excuse me now," and she fell into step with the Englishman, as he started toward the opposite wall, intent on setting the width of the walk between themselves and the irritating young Panamanian, who so plainly had some right to Lolita which he himself had not.

"Though I promised not to speak to your father, I have never promised not to hope that you would change your mind—or to stand calmly by while you flirt with that silly little cousin of yours," began Mr. Markham sulkily.

His tone was cold and hard, but Lolita rejoiced at the words. She lived on the thrills and stabs which she could extract from him, promising herself each day, like the victim of a drug, that on the next she would take some step that would put him permanently out of her reach; and then asking of the new day only that it give her something of him—some word or look or touch—to make her know that she lived.

Now they stood above the court in which the shifting shadows of the prisoners wavered like dark clouds against the darkly shadowed depths, and the sparks of many tiny charcoal cooking fires twinkled and glowed, like stars in an inverted midnight sky.

"I think I know how they must feel down there," said Lolita softly. "They are not cold or hungry or suffering—most of them. Only, up here is a world of light and joyousness which they can never enter, and they sit and wonder, feeling just a little dull and sad—and still." Her trailing voice both gave and renounced that which he asked and offered her. It was a little trick that she had learned, to test herself and him.

"Lolita," he replied, with a manner which was halting and restrained, in direct contrast to the impassioned aban-

don of Raoul, "it is unthinkable that this should go on! You have not told me—and I have never asked—what it is that stands between us, but there must be some way out—there must be! In spite of what my own eyes have seen, I can not believe that you love your cousin. There must be some explanation. Nor can you be simply a heartless flirt. Won't you tell me now and let me help you think? You are such a little girl and so sweet. You might easily think something that was a mistake, you know."

"But this is a thing that I could never tell to any one!" cried the girl in a sudden panic. "Oh, please don't ask! Believe only that I am trying to do what is right and that it is difficult!"

She turned away; for a second it seemed to her that he might guess, if she remained, and that, before her eyes, his look of love might die away.

At that moment a small brown boy broke from the moving mass and pounced upon Lolita, as upon a much-sought article.

"I have been looking everywhere for you, Señorita Lolita!" he exclaimed. "La Señora Elia wishes you to go at once into her house alone and up to the nursery, without speaking to any one. I do not know, but I think that she is ill."

The youngster delivered the message, with his own conclusion, in one breath and then vanished, in the magic way that children have, before Lolita could ask a question.

"How strange!" she commented to Cecil, in puzzled agitation. "Of course I must go immediately!"

"Perhaps I can be of some service?" suggested her companion.

Both were more obsessed by the thought of remaining together than anxious over Amelia's possible predicament.

"No," Lolita forced herself to reply. "She said to come alone. But you might wait here, so that I can find you easily if anything is needed."

"I will not stir from this spot until you return," promised the Englishman, as the girl hurried away.

Lolita found Señora Elia—as she had been led to suppose that she would—in the nursery, a large, bare room, containing, besides a portable tub, scales, and the other impedimenta of a modern baby, two small beds, one of which was empty and the other of which cradled the sleeping son and heir of the house of Elia.

Amelia, in a magnificent evening gown of gold-and-white brocade, with diamonds gleaming upon her breast and wrists, stood beside the empty bed, and there was that in her face which made Lolita draw back, with a little startled cry, at the sight of it.

"Amelia!" she exclaimed. "What is wrong—what is it?"

Without a word, but with a gesture of infinite pathos, the tall, white, proudly tearless woman held out her arms to the beautifully budding girl, who, half fearfully, permitted herself to be gathered into a close embrace.

Lolita lost her fear, however, when she felt Amelia's still, cold bosom against her own and, putting up an impulsive, warm little loving hand against the older woman's cheek, she said:

"Tell me, Amelia, what dreadful thing has come to thee. Why didst thou send for me?"

"Just a year ago, Lolita, my little boy—my first-born, who might have given meaning to the fact that I still lived—was taken from me. And to-night—" Her voice broke, yet she did not look as if she could ever weep, and in a moment she went on, in the terribly impersonal tone of a Fate, "To-night—just as I was coming to join thee on the Bovedas—word was

brought to me that Ricardo was—is dead—that he died two weeks ago in Paris—that for two whole weeks Ricardo has been lying under the ground, while I—I have been dancing, carrying on my petty round of fancied obligations, and suckling the child of the man to whom my parents sold me for the sake of money and respectability—of the man who forced them to sell me, who bought me knowing that my heart belonged to another! I have but one life to live, and I have let others make of it a mockery—a mockery!”

Lolita's arms tightened about her cousin's swaying form.

“Amelia—Amelia!” she whispered, and burst into hysterical sobs, aghast at the sudden realization of human impotence when confronted with the ways of destiny.

It was Amelia who did the comforting. Very tenderly she held the girl at arm's length and spoke:

“I have sent for thee, Lolita, because I know that thou art in a position such as was mine, and because I would not have thee ruin thy life through fear, as did I. Thou once didst say to me, little cousin, that it was thy childhood's dream to grow to be like me. I was touched by that, and so have called thee here to show thee what I really am—a wreck, because of the cowardice of my youth—and to beg thee to be different, to help thee to be so. There is but one thing that matters, child—at least, to a woman. Public opinion, duty to one's family, honor—all of these are empty words. A woman should follow her heart always. I know what thy father and thy mother wish for thee, but thou hast but one life and it is thine own. If thou lovest Raoul—as I loved Ricardo——”

Amelia proceeded no further, for Lolita was staring at her with a strange, fascinated expression, at once ecstatic and apologetic. Now she broke in:

“How can I thank thee—how can I

tell thee? It is not Raoul whom I love, but——”

“Not Raoul!” Amelia's cry of shocked surprise sounded incongruous, almost commonplace, after the tense self-revelation of her former speech.

“No.” With girlish egotism, Lolita forgot Amelia's grief in the statement of her own perplexities. “No. It is Cecil whom I love. Only, long ago, I promised Raoul——”

It was no willful desire to garble the truth, but youthful shame and diffidence that tinged the girl's account of the affair.

She did not progress far, however, for suddenly Amelia began to laugh—a low, ironic, bitter laugh, most terrible to hear.

“So even that is taken from me!” she said softly, as if to herself. “The poignant pleasure of a parallel—that far-fetched semblance of a vengeance, which I thought was mine! Verily I am stripped and stark! There is but one thing left—to keep the world from knowing how completely it has conquered me. Go away, child! I must learn my lesson in solitude.”

“But, Amelia, does that change the things which thou hast said?”

Slowly Lolita's piteous appeal penetrated through the mantle of isolation in which Señora Elia had wrapped herself. With smoldering, introspective eyes, she looked down upon the girl as if from a great height. When she spoke, her voice was that of an oracle. The price of ignorance she herself would pay; she still would spare the other. Even in failure, Amelia was a bigger woman than Lolita could ever hope to be.

“Child,” she said, “a woman's honor lies in the dictates of her heart. If thou hast made a mistake, it is but a thing to forget. Love is the only word for a woman to remember. Please go, dear.”

CHAPTER V.

She held out a slender white hand, which Lolita seized and kissed.

"Thou wouldst not have me stay?" the girl proffered wistfully, while her feet twitched to be away.

Amelia smiled and, for the first time, a single slow tear rolled down her cheek.

"No, child, I wish to be alone," she said.

Looking backward, Lolita left the room. Very soberly she took up her vender's tray and retraced the few steps that lay between the gallery of Señora Elia's home and the curve in the wall where Cecil awaited her. Her face was still solemn when she came up to him.

"Is there anything I can do? May I be of service?" he asked eagerly.

Lolita shook her head and plucked aimlessly at the blossoms on her tray. A continuous minor wailing, like the calling of weird night birds, was wafted up from the court below.

"I wish," said Lolita at last, "that there was some way that I could let them know—down there—that sometimes things do change—that it is not always futile to hope."

Then, moved by an impulse which Cecil could not yet understand, she began to throw the bouquets, one by one, down into the pit. A shout and a scrambling scuffle floated up to the two. Lolita laughed—a little trill of excited exultation—a little pledge of determination. In a moment, her flowers were gone. Then she cast aside her tray and, empty-handed, turned toward Cecil.

"Some one who is much older and wiser and lovelier than I," she said, "has explained things to me so that they all seem different. To-morrow—if you will—you may go to my father."

Down in the prison court, a worn old hag, in a soiled *camisa*, picked up one of the frivolous, frilled bouquets and, crumpling it furtively into the folds of her rags, crept away to the moldering pallet upon which she slept.

"Help me! It can not be really lying, when it is to be true to my love. Amelia says that only so can a woman feel right—and she should know. In all things else, I will speak the truth and forever strive to be worthy of my great happiness. I swear it! Also, it is the wish of my parents, and to obey them can not be a sin. I was such a little girl. I knew not what I did. But now I am a woman, and my heart speaks. Help me and tell me what to say to keep them from finding out!"

With all of the sophistry and witchery at her command, Lolita prayed, convinced, in the depths of her pious and superstitious little being, that if the Divine Mother could be coaxed into comprehending and sanctioning the paradoxical virtue of the crooked path she must tread, all would be well.

"It is true that love is the greatest of all things. It can not, therefore, be very wrong for me to distort an ancient fact a little, in order to keep my beloved. He would certainly leave me if he learned everything."

The Virgin of La Capilla de la Merced—the tiny, ancient stone shrine behind the great church of San Merced, on a corner of the Avenida Central, in the very core of the business section of the city—had harkened to the heart throbs of the women of Panama for centuries. Railed in her niche beneath a miniature dome, before which hung a lamp that was never extinguished, she listened, with sublime serenity, to the woes of her share of the world. Four very old carved benches occupied the small floor space before her, and access might be had to her at all hours of the day and night through the two never-closed arched openings leading from the two converging streets. Many were the miracles she had performed, as was testified by the numerous gold and silver trinkets with which her person was

adorned, and the little mound of pitiful, precious tawdry treasures that lay about her feet.

Here, on the morning after the *bomberos'* fair, knelt Lolita, wrapped from head to foot in a mantilla of white Spanish lace, while, outside, the Ibañez *cochero* lazily flicked the flies from the heads of his drowsing horses, and Ignacia, sheltered by the hood of the landau from the sweltering sun, busied her stiff old fingers with a bit of lace which she was crocheting for her young mistress.

To say to Cecil Markham, in the first flush of rapturous relief, and confiding utterly in the judgment of the beautiful older cousin who had always been her model, "To-morrow you may go to my father," had been simple enough; and, having said it, Lolita had felt no regrets, but had immediately begun to shape her course accordingly.

Morning, however, had brought all sorts of disquieting reflections. It was all very well for her to take the step, but, in reality, her safety rested in the hands of Raoul, who would feel himself injured and be in a mood for revenge. She realized now that, for the sake of happiness, she had risked a possibility of revelations that would bring misery and disgrace, not only upon herself, but upon all connected with her, including Cecil, who had become the mainspring of her life. Well, she would fight. If need be, she would lie to the last with words, in order to live the truth.

The girl, when she returned home, found her family almost hysterically elated. Mr. Markham had been accepted as a son-in-law with becoming dignity, but also with open arms, and had been pressed, in his new capacity, to remain informally to breakfast. Lolita was fondled and made much of, and plans were immediately laid upon the table for a formal announcing of the good tidings to relatives and intimates at tea time the next day.

"The season is so nearly over that

we can scarcely afford to wait," declared Señora Ibañez, "if you want to have the wedding while the weather is still decent. Let me see. We can send Tonio and Ernesto out to the villa in the morning, to superintend the gathering of suitable fruits and flowers. I shall have to make up the order for the confectioner this afternoon. We must ask——"

And so on indefinitely, while the lovers, sitting side by side and absorbed with an interchange of shy, fleeting touches and glances, acquiesced happily in any and every provision that was made for them.

Lolita's first trial came a little later, when Señora Ibañez—having installed the fiancés in the drawing-room and being mentally preoccupied by the details of the morrow's hospitality—scurried away to interview her major-domo, to examine her linen, and to peer into her well-stocked storerooms, satisfying her chaperon's conscience by popping into the *sala* at discreetly irregular intervals. In the partial and somewhat nerve-racking freedom thus obtained, Lolita and Cecil beamed blissfully upon each other and undertook the pleasant task of adjusting themselves to their new rôles. Both were extraordinarily content, and Lolita, after her weeks of renunciation and stimulated by the Damoclean danger of exposure that hovered constantly in the background of her consciousness, threw herself headlong into joy, intoxicating her lover with moments of fierce abandon, alternated with others of girlish reserve and coyness. Feeling herself to have been born and educated for love alone, and loving, as she did, with the whole of her first, fresh fervor, she was a bewitching, wholly captivating product.

The *mauvais quart d'heure* came, however, when Cecil, moved by a desire to clean the cobwebs of misgiving completely from his soul, told her of the sight which he had inadvertently

witnessed on the gallery of Señora Elia's; told her, also, of the torment of suspicions and doubts that had been his, and begged her to set his mind at rest with an explanation.

Obviously there was but one thing for Lolita to do, and this, in pursuance of her defiant resolution, she promptly did.

"It is only," she said, looking away with a pretty pretense of bashfulness, "that, when I was a very little girl—before I went away to school—my cousin asked me to marry him, and I said that I would. And when I came back, and he insisted that we were, on that account, betrothed, I thought that I was bound to abide by it. I was trying to do what was right, but I was very miserable.

"Then Cousin Amelia, who is very wonderful and good and who guessed something of my trouble, sent for me and told me that a little girl's mistake was but a thing to forget, and that only by following her heart could a woman feel honorable. And so my feeling of right was changed, and I came and told you. You are not angry because of that?"

"And that is all, Lolita?"

"That is all." Bravely she met his eyes.

"It is a little, foolish thing, dear child, to have caused so much suspense and pain. But perhaps I love you the better for your scruples. The Markham women have always been so true and so high above reproach. It was worth a little waiting to have you show yourself so surely one of them. I do not think that anything could make me doubt you now. You are the immaculate perfection of my dream wife, child."

Cecil's voice was very tender, but at the same time smugly English. It suggested a painted gallery of high-born Anglo-Saxon dames, who would look down with awful condemnation upon

an interloping, erring little Latin maid. With a half-stifled sob, Lolita buried her face in her hands.

"Darling, what is it? I can not understand," very gently her lover removed the concealing fingers.

"Oh, Cecil," she cried, from the very sincerest depths of her, "I do not feel worthy of the things which you say! But I will try—every day of my life—to make those beautiful things more true."

So she made afresh to him the vow that she had made at the shrine. And then, in order that the chance to make that proposed struggle for perfection might not be lost to her, she set her mind deliberately to work on the problem of Raoul. How to find out, before the next day's festivities, what his attitude would be? How best to manage him? There was, of course, the possibility that he might relinquish her with a good grace—that he might prove chivalrous enough to give up his claim for the sake of her happiness; but this was far from being a probability. Lolita knew the temper of the South too well. And if he set out in a jealous rage to fight, had he weapons which she could not parry? He would naturally think of exposure, but without proof, there was scant reason why his word should stand against hers. Lacking proof, her kinsmen would punish him for calumny, and there the affair would end.

Had he kept her letters, and, if so, was there in them anything that could not be amply accounted for by her story of a childish engagement? Most troubling of all, had he kept the sash, which he had taken from her so long ago and which he had romantically sworn to preserve. It had been an expensive piece of silk, embroidered with her name, a present from her father, who had been vexed at its mysterious disappearance. Raoul's years of wandering had so cooled his ardor that he

might possess none of these things; a boy does not cling to souvenirs as does a girl. And yet—he might have kept them. If he had, would he think to use them? These were questions which Raoul alone could answer, and Lolita could think of no way to bring about a meeting with him before the public announcement, planned for the next day.

Cecil lingered until time to dress for dinner and then hurried away, promising to return in an hour. As usual, the evening was filled with social engagements, from none of which could the girl escape. But one avenue of succor stood open to her, and this she took. Having assured herself that her mother was safely in the hands of Maria, her maid, Lolita stole down to the telephone and rang up Amelia. The attitude of Señora Elia, even, might change, should Raoul divulge to her the entire facts, but that was a chance which the girl must run.

"Dear Amelia," she began, in a hurried, desperate half whisper, "thou knowest—mother must have told thee—it's all settled, and the engagement is to be announced at tea to-morrow. Yes, yes—I'm very, very happy, and it's all due to thee. Only I'm frightened, too. I'm afraid, if he hears it suddenly, that Raoul may make a scene. Wilt thou please, please, try to get hold of him and tell him before to-morrow? I know it's a great deal to ask—now especially—but thou art so—so compelling, Amelia. If thou wouldst talk to him—just a little bit, as thou didst to me—it might be that thou couldst make him see. I hope I'm not being too selfish, but wilt thou—please? I just couldn't bear to have anything spoiled now! Oh, I thank thee—I thank thee! I owe everything to thee, Amelia! I must run. *Mamã's* half dressed, and Ignacia's raving."

The news of the death of Ricardo had, inevitably, been noised abroad, and

many were the maliciously inquisitive eyes turned upon Señora Elia when she entered her box at the National Theater that evening. Exquisitely clad in gleaming white satin and diamonds, as was her custom, the beautiful, marble-faced woman sat beside her husband, responding with careful correctness to his inane, but barbed remarks, and bore their scrutiny without flinching. Only her tense, slender fingers clutched the sticks of her ivory and point-lace fan until they snapped. When Señor Elia, with leering solicitude, called her attention to this fact, she laid the fan aside, but vouchsafed no reply.

During the first long intermission, Lolita and Cecil paid a visit to the Elias' box and, after both had received congratulations—for the state of their affairs was already understood by the relatives—Amelia found an opportunity to whisper to the girl; while her husband, who had some interests in the new English company, made himself unctuously affable to its young representative.

"I will see Raoul in the morning," she said. "He's gone to a stag party to-night. But I'll try to make everything right. I do want thy path to be a smooth one, dear."

At that moment, the ancient monastery bell, which had been transformed to the tower of the theater, rang out the signal for the second overture. There followed a general rush for seats, and Lolita could only press her cousin's hand and look her gratitude.

But late that night, when she knelt upon the brocaded *prie-dieu*, in the little alcove beside her bed, and looked up at her own little gilded Virgin, who had watched over her since her earliest recollections, Lolita said:

"To-day I have told a lie, but it was one that had to be; and I will never, never say a thing that is false, except when it is necessary to preserve my love. I love him so—I love him so!"

she repeated, as if it were a formula for salvation.

Then, with conscience swept clean, she hopped down upon her little bare pink heels and, with a flutter of rosy chiffon, leaped into her lace-draped bed.

CHAPTER VI.

Although he had been out nearly all night and his head ached abominably, Raoul was willing enough to comply with Amelia's summons; for not only was she generally beloved by the members of the clan, for whose sake she had consented to unite herself to the cordially disliked, but undeniably wealthy and influential head of the house of Elia, but, in the boy's case, there were especial and personal grounds for gratitude and affection. Hoping to hear something to his advantage regarding his inamorata, Raoul, with the aid of his devoted *muchacho*, made a punctilious morning toilet and then left the bachelor apartment, remote from the paternal roof, in which—as befitted an emancipated, Paris-educated young dandy—he preferred the freedom of living.

The day was glorious and, with a song on his lips, Raoul drove his big touring car recklessly around corners and through steep and narrow streets to the foot of the incline that led up to Las Bovedas, and thence to the door of Señora Elia's charming *casa*.

Having explained, with ingenuous frankness, to her lord and master that her mission was merely to break kindly to her young kinsman the news that the girl whom he so plainly sought and adored was pledged to another, Amelia was permitted to receive the boy alone.

"Thou'rt good to come so promptly, Raoul," she greeted him gently. "Sit down, please. *Quieres un cigarillo?*"

Her task was not easy, but she did not shirk—hastened into it, rather, knowing that Señor Elia would not

give them much time and wishing to calm the boy and persuade him into generosity, should the need arise.

"I have something to tell thee, cousin," she went on, therefore, as soon as they were seated, "and I am going to ask thee to bear it bravely and to be strong enough—as I believe thou art—to think more of the happiness of one whom thou lovest than of thine own."

"What is it—Lolita?" Before her words were done, Raoul was pale and standing.

"Sit down, dear boy. Yes, Lolita has accepted Mr. Markham, and this afternoon—thou hast been invited, I suppose—her parents have arranged an impromptu reception for the purpose of giving the news to the world."

"But it is impossible! Thou canst not know—thou canst not understand all——"

"Please sit down, dear boy. I do know. Lolita has told me. It is hard for thee, my cousin. Still, loving her as I know thou dost, thou——"

"Lolita has told thee, and yet thou wouldst have her—wouldst have her faithless? Are they forcing her to it, thy uncle and aunt? Tell me—are they?"

"No, no, Raoul. It is what they desired, most fortunately, but, with her whole heart, Lolita loves the Englishman, and that being so, it is right that she should marry him. Surely thou wouldst not have it otherwise? Raoul, I have suffered much, as all my kinsfolk know and as even thou, in spite of thy youth, must understand; and because of that suffering and the knowledge which is mine of how grief over a mistake may wreck the life of a woman, I beg of thee, do nothing to mar the happiness of the girl whom thou lovest! There is naught to gain for thyself, for her love can never be thine."

"It was!"

"The fancy of a fourteen-year-old

child may develop into love, but it is not that in the beginning. Her promise to thee was made in ignorance of life's meaning. There is no way to secure happiness, through her, for thyself. Be greatly generous, dear cousin, and do naught to set a blight upon the joy that is hers. Thou wouldst not, if 'twere possible, possess a girl against her will."

"Would I not? Thou mayst know much about a woman's heart, Cousin Amelia, but thou knowest very little about a man's. She is mine, and I will not give her up to another! I tell thee, I will not!"

Without giving Amelia time to reply, the boy rushed from the house and leaped into his car. Scarcely knowing what he did, he hurled himself through the streets. Pedestrians and animals parted before his onslaught, as water parts before the prow of a plunging ship.

Raoul's destination was the home of the Ibañez', but fate, in the shape of Señor Sebastiano Amado, his father, intervened. That worthy gentleman happened to be sipping coffee upon one of the balconies of El Club Union, from which point of vantage he chanced to observe the ruthless passage of his son. Being annoyed thereat, he arose with a shout and with an arresting gesture of his walking stick, which plainly indicated that he had something of importance to say, and that Raoul would do well to pause and listen.

Habitual deference to an authoritative parent, who—as is often the case among Latins—exact such accordance in return for great liberality, brought the boy automatically to a standstill. With a grinding of brakes and a muttered curse, Raoul stopped the car and, springing out, stormed impatiently up the stairs.

"Have I not told thee a hundred times that, if thou hast no regard for thy own neck, thou shouldst at least have some

thought for others'? If I see thee drive once more as thou wert doing just now, I shall take thy car from thee, and thou shalt not soon have another!"

The irate words of his father brought suddenly to the mind of the outraged lover a very practical consideration. It was perfectly possible for his parent to put such a threat into execution. Not only could he deprive Raoul of his car, should he so desire, but of his apartment, of his comfortable income, of, in fact, his entire means of support. This being so, would it not be the height of wisdom to make an ally of the old gentleman before proceeding to a violent disrupting of the cherished schemes of Señor Ibañez?

Bearing this in mind, Raoul made a hasty apology for his apparent disregard of his father's instructions and went on to explain that neglect by pouring out, without reserve, his tale of bitterness, disappointed hopes, and wild, half-formed resolutions.

Señor Sebastiano Amado listened sympathetically. To a South American, there is never anything either ridiculous or embarrassing in the disclosure of an *affaire de cœur*. It was perfectly natural and simple for Raoul to confess his sentiments to his father in perfervid sentences; and it was with unaffected and kindly courtesy, quite unmixed with amusement, that the older gentleman attended. Nor was Señor Amado as shocked as a Northerner would have been at the knowledge that his son had been too intimate with a little girl cousin. The children should have been more carefully guarded, of course, but there the elders had been at fault. His own youthful record would scarcely permit him to rebuke his son upon moral grounds and, since no harm had come of it, the less said, the better.

"I'm sorry for thee, Raoul," he consoled sincerely, "since thou art so perturbed. But really there is nothing that we can do about it. Thou mayst take

a trip somewhere, if thou wilt. Run over to Paris for a few months, and thy grief will fade."

"But, *padre mio*, my whole heart is set upon Lolita, and surely, if we laid the matter before my uncle and threatened to make all public if he would not submit——"

"Tush, boy! Such talk is folly!" decreed Señor Amado definitely. "It is sad for thee, I admit, but we have staked all our interests in the new company. Should we antagonize Mr. Markham now—and through him Sir Barrett—we might all be ruined. There we are!"

Señor Amado's respect for his son's chagrin was genuine, but there is one thing dearer to the Panamaian than his passion, and that is his purse. With a shrug and an outward fling of the hands, the father dismissed Raoul's objections as secondary, and laid the more important matter of the family's finances upon the table.

The boy, while he recognized the significance of it all, was still too young to succumb to practical necessity without a struggle. Insubordinate and sulky, he demanded:

"Then thou wilt not help me—wilt do nothing about it?"

"It's impossible, my dear boy!" returned Señor Amado resignedly. "Thou seest where we stand. Forget thy disappointment."

"I will not! If thou wilt not aid me, I will see what I can accomplish myself."

"Thou wilt do nothing so foolish—unless it be, also, thy wish to see thyself penniless," commanded his father sternly. "For the sake of thy entire family, thou must let this matter rest. If thou takest a single step without my approbation, thou wilt find thyself without a centavo. Don't be an imbecile, boy! I have said that I regret thy discomfort sorely, but it is only by making an occasional sacrifice for the

good of all that our house has become what it is. Look at Amelia. Brace up, my son. Thou must drop into thy uncle's this afternoon as if naught bothered thee, and to-morrow, if thou wilt, thou mayst start for Europe. Come, come—thou'rt young, and I will be liberal with thee. Things are not so black." The father laid an indulgent, affectionate, middle-aged hand upon the knee of his son.

But Raoul was not to be thus comforted.

"I can never forget her!" he moaned, with his head in his hands. "She is mine, and it is unjust! I will not have her stolen thus away from me! I will find a way!" He sprang to his feet and was about to dash off.

Señor Amado, however, plucked him back.

"Think well," he warned. "If thou createst a disturbance, thou wilt lose not only the girl, but all thou hast. If I am not obeyed in this, thou shalt never have another penny!"

The boy angrily drew himself free and plunged desperately down the stairs. But the cautious words had had their effect, and Señor Amado knew, from the look in his son's eyes, that Raoul would not forget what had been said to him. The father did not, however, intend to rely upon chance. Descending, therefore, with as much haste as his dignity would allow, he called a *coche* and had himself driven to the residence of Señor Ibañez.

He found his brother-in-law in jubilant spirits.

"Welcome—welcome, Sebastiano!" cried Señor Ibañez, while he embraced his visitor and bestowed a hearty kiss upon first one and then the other of his ruddy cheeks. "Cecil has just left. Everything has been most satisfactorily arranged. See—here are the papers! Lolita's *dot*—fifty thousand, thou knowest—will be settled entirely upon her—

self. He insisted upon it, and also upon adding— Well, for an Englishman, he is extraordinarily in love! He's already cabled Sir Barrett, who will come over for the wedding. Everything's working out splendidly!"

"I rejoice with thee, *amigo mio*," responded Señor Amado, with the formally complimentary air which the occasion demanded, "and I congratulate thee for thy skill in management. It's particularly fortunate, too, that the children are so fond of each other. And, in that connection, I've just a word of suggestion. Better hasten the ceremony as much as may be. My boy's just been talking to me. It seems that, when they were both infants out in the savannas—there was some trifling flirtation between him and Lolita. Child's folly, of course, but Raoul takes it much to heart. I've quieted him and, shortly, I'll pack him off to Europe. But in the meantime, I advise thee to make all secure and definite. Youth is hot-headed, thou knowest, and while I have his behavior under control, he might upset the girl with some sort of wild talk."

"*Caramba!*" ejaculated Señor Ibañez in consternation. "Thy boy deserves a good beating—if he has injured Lolita—"

"Now, now, it was over three years ago. Canst see for thyself that Lolita is none the worse. It is only that he fancies he has some claim on account of their childish nonsense, and we don't want to start any gossip that might scare Markham. The English are so conservative about these things."

"Ah, yes, I comprehend." Señor Ibañez thought best to resume his manner of cordial courtesy. "'Twas kind of thee to tell me, Sebastiano. Naturally I was put out at first. But, thank Heaven, there's nothing in it to interfere— I'm really sorry for Raoul, too. If I hadn't other plans, I might have considered— Well, get him

away as soon as thou canst, and I'll rush the marriage through."

When Señor Amado had departed, Señor Ibañez sought his spouse.

"Here's a pretty mix-up!" he announced. "Thy brother has just called and informed me that young Raoul and Lolita had some sort of an—er—understanding, when they were children, and that the boy—being still madly in love—threatens, in consequence, to try to claim the child."

"Thou dost not mean— *Ay, ay—* my little girl! It can't be possible!"

"Hush, woman! This is no time for hysterics! Lolita's all right. Say nothing to her about it. Only we must hurry the wedding as much as possible. It might mean ruin to all of us if anything should balk the affair now—and Raoul's such a young hot-head! That must be why Lolita hung off so long. Still, she seems more than contented now."

"*Ay*, what a misfortune! My head is splitting, and everything's in a muddle! That stupid confectioner has made green ices instead of pink—and now thou tellest me this! To think that our little girl—"

Señora Ibañez plumped solidly into a chair and began to weep with fatigue and confusion.

"There, there!" her husband comforted her. "He didn't say that they actually— But it's best not to inquire too much into the past," he felt forced to add out of the wisdom of his experience. "Things will come out all right. Just keep an eye on Lolita. Don't let Raoul near her, and we'll have her safely married as soon as Sir Barrett can get here."

"I'll do the best I can. *Ay*, it's time to dress now! What have I done to deserve such a calamity? I'd like to shake that girl! In spite of all my watchfulness! No, no, I won't say anything!" and the poor, overwrought

woman dried her eyes and hurried away.

The party was a great success. Lolita, beaming and blushing, looked more like a rose than ever. Every one was pleased, and the house buzzed like a beehive with smug, congratulatory sounds.

Raoul, arriving late, looked pale and distraught, but behaved with propriety. With the eyes of his father, Señor Ibañez, and Amelia all fixed upon him, he could scarcely do otherwise. It was quite impossible for him to approach Lolita and, beyond sulking moodily in corners and rebuffing brusquely whoever tried to converse with him—conduct to be expected of a rejected suitor and more flattering to the girl than not—he dared not venture.

Lolita's mind was infinitely relieved and grateful. She was much touched by what she deemed to be chivalry, and, as the afternoon rounded into a radiant, glowing whole—a suave jewel for a bridal memory box—her heart sang a pæan of thanksgiving.

"It has been a perfectly, flawlessly happy day!" she said to her lover, when he bade her good night. "Wasn't it dear and lovely of every one—every one—to be so pleased?"

She repeated the same tribute to her mother, a few moments later, and Señora Ibañez echoed the sentiment with the words, "There wasn't a hitch anywhere!" accompanied by a tired sigh of achievement.

In a sleepy haze of girlish bliss, Lolita floated into her rose-hung room and, seizing the waiting Ignacia around the waist, gave her an excited little hug and then laid her black head down upon the breast of her old nurse.

"I'm so happy," she said, "I'm almost afraid! It's unreal for a day to pass so beautifully. Please make haste with my stays. I'm so deliciously weary."

"My pretty baby! No one is as pleased as old Ignacia."

With deft and soothingly habitual movements, the old woman removed one silken garment after another and prepared her charge for bed. The dainty task was done, and Ignacia had a hand upon the light, ready to extinguish it, when she bethought herself of a mission unfulfilled. Thrusting her hand into her bosom, she extracted a letter, which she delivered to the girl.

"Here, *niña*," she apologized, "I almost forgot. Thy cousin, young Señor Raoul, gave me this for thee. Perhaps I ought not to have taken it, but he begged so hard and said it was a thing which thou wouldst wish to have. I hope that I did right?"

Lolita trembled.

"Yes, yes, that was quite right, Ignacia," she reassured her nurse. "I thank thee. Please go now. I will put out the light when I have read my message. *Buenas noches*."

Left alone, Lolita hesitated, turning the sealed note this way and that, dreading to open it, yet longing to know the worst. Perhaps it was but to confirm his kindness, to tell her to banish fear and to wish her happiness. But perhaps—

With frantic courage, she tore the envelope across and drew out the folded paper it contained. The words danced before her eyes:

LOLITA MIA: For thou art mine, in spite of everything. I will not give thee up—no, not for the sake of thy own happiness. I want thee, and thou art mine; it is a fact that will not change. I appealed to my father, and he refused to help, so now the matter lies in thy own hands. If thou wilt refuse to marry the Englishman and wilt keep thy pact with me, all will be well. They can not coerce thee. Thy father, even, would not compel thee against thy will—nor would they leave us penniless. No one outside would ever know the thing that has been between thee and me.

But if thou wilt not do this, I will go straight to the Englishman and will tell him all, and will show to him thy letters and the sash, which I have always kept. He will never marry thee after that—and I will do

what I say, regardless of what I may lose. I cannot see thee the wife of another, no matter what the cost. I will give thee three days in which to reply. This is Tuesday. On Saturday morning, if I have not heard from thee, I will go to Cecil Markham with my story and the proof. It is but justice that I ask and, if thou wert not bewitched, thou wouldst see it as I do. Oh, Lolita, come to me, and I will make thee love me as I did before! Thy miserable

RAOUL.

The girl read the letter twice, trying to force its meaning into her exhausted understanding. Then, with the paper still in her hand, she turned out the light and crept into bed.

The room was warm and scented and silent. From far away, where some natives danced on the outskirts of the town, came the pulsing pound of the tom-toms. Then the whistles of the guards around the prison proclaimed the midnight hour. A *coche* passed, and a girl's laugh rang out. A youth strolled by, lilting lightly to the softened strum of his guitar. The incoming surf slapped dully against the sand. The heat of the sultry dark was too great for the world to sleep, but, cowering beneath her coverlet of silk and lace, Lolita shivered and shook as if with the cold, while, with both little hands, she held a pillow clutched like a gag against her contorted face.

CHAPTER VII.

"You're looking dreadfully pale, darling—and you're not eating a thing. Are you ill?"

Cecil Markham bent anxiously over the wan little fiancée who sat at his side. It was Friday morning, and Cecil was breakfasting—as had become his delightful daily privilege—with the Ibañez family.

"Try to drink your wine!" and, with a delicious sense of intimate daring and an abandon to impulsive demonstration which was more Latin than English, he slipped an arm about her shoulders.

Lolita smiled, took the tiniest possible sip, and, with a weary gesture of her head, waved the glass away.

"It's nothing. I'm all right," she said, with a visible effort at sprightliness. His infrequent lapses from reserve always touched and pleased her.

Señor Ibañez cast a troubled glance at his daughter and then came briskly to her rescue.

"It's no wonder she looks done up," he said. "If one listened to the women, one would have to assume that the marriage ceremony precludes a girl from ever buying another article of wearing apparel. With the fourteen trunks of clothes the child brought over from Paris scarcely a month ago, it would seem——"

"But those were not trousseau gowns, *mi amigo*," interposed Señora Ibañez, "and most of them were only suitable for a *jeune fille*. Men have no idea of propriety. Of course Lolita's exhausted. She's been standing for fittings the entire morning. But that's to be expected. It's absurd to have things made here, but it's all we can do in so short a time. I remember that I had hysterics regularly for a week before I was married and fainted twice on the day. It's perfectly natural.

"Lolita dear, I want thee to go straight to thy room, after *almuerzo*, and lie down all of the afternoon. There's the Pizas' dinner dance to-night and the Tivoli ball to-morrow, and thou must look as fresh as possible. As for me, I don't suppose I can take a moment's rest until the whole affair is over. This afternoon I have to address all the invitations. They've arrived, thank goodness, and I want to send them out to-night, so that every one will have them before the ball. It will give them something to talk about."

"May I assist with the addressing?" offered Cecil politely.

"No, thank you. I'd really much rather you'd run off somewhere. It

makes me fidgety to have a man fussing about, and I'm never satisfied unless I attend to everything myself. Then I'm sure there are no mistakes."

Señor Ibañez and Cecil exchanged furtive half smiles. But their attention was instantly diverted by Lolita, who spoke in a voice which was strangely thick with foreboding and with the difficulty of giving that feeling expression:

"*Mamá*, I wish thou wouldst not send the invitations quite so quickly."

"What dost thou mean, child? Art crazy?" Señor Ibañez's question was peremptory and stern.

Cecil looked dazedly abashed.

"I don't know, *papá*, but I feel—I feel as if something were going to happen—as if I were going to be very ill."

"Nonsense, *niña*! Girls always feel that way—just before. Thou wilt recover from it as soon as thou hast had some rest."

"But, *mamá*——"

"Lolita, don't you want to have it—soon?" Cecil's bewilderment was pathetic.

"Yes, yes." The girl turned pleading eyes upon her lover. "Only—I don't know—perhaps it's just because I'm too tired—only, I feel suddenly frightened—as if——"

"There, there, dear—*mamá* will put thee to bed. Come!" and, with a frown and a significant shake of her head at the two gentlemen—intended to convey the information that such conduct was but natural upon the part of a prospective bride and should be accepted without notice—Señora Ibañez rose and led her daughter solicitously from the room.

In spite of the good woman's plausible explanation, Cecil remained somewhat unnerved by the incident. The barest suggestion of reluctance, coming from Lolita, was infinitely disquieting. In vain he summoned to his mind memories of her melting moods—

precious moments snatched from under the eyes of careful chaperons—in which she had shown him, beyond a doubt, how genuine was her affection. But he, too, was living under the strain of excited tension, where molehills can so easily become exaggerated into mountains, and his disappointment at having the girl spirited away from him for the entire afternoon put him into that absurd, unreasonable state of masculine childishness which is so apt to develop into maudlin self-pity, if not banished in time by a feminine expert.

Having an intellectual appreciation of his own temporary emotional morbidity, Cecil determined to try what a few drinks in a bluff man's atmosphere would accomplish and hied himself, therefore, to the University Club.

His quest for congenial comradeship was doomed to failure, however, for it was still too early in the afternoon for the club habitués to have congregated, and he found the big rooms almost empty. He did, to be sure, catch a glimpse of Tonio and Ernesto Amado, together with several other young Panamaians, gathered around a card table in a secluded alcove; but while Lolita was all that one's heart could desire, when it came to male companionship, Cecil retained a decided preference for the English and American cliques. He passed on, therefore, without making his presence known and, selecting a comfortable chair in a shady corner, ordered a whisky and soda and gave himself up to brooding.

The first half hour went badly; but gradually Cecil's cramped mind relaxed, his dreams flowed back, and he drifted again into the intense contentment that was normally his, these days, and from that into a pleasant doze.

So the hot afternoon wore away. When he awoke—not with a start, but easily and by degrees, as he had fallen asleep—Cecil noted, first, that several groups of acquaintances had dropped

in and were teazing at sundry cozy little tables on the gallery. Then, while he lay speculating as to which party he could most profitably join, he became aware that the card players whom he had marked upon entering had given up their game and had ensconced themselves on the opposite side of the bank of ferns and palms that screened his own chair from view, and were engaged in bandying well-spiced gossip over their customary glasses of iced champagne.

As their conversation was plainly audible, Cecil would ordinarily have either changed his position or have made them aware of his proximity; but before he was sufficiently awake to have collected his wits and decided upon a move, the name of Lolita fell upon his ears and held him spellbound, regardless of codes. They spoke in Spanish, but that tongue was almost as familiar to Cecil as his own.

"I'd like to know the truth of the matter," declared a youthful, maliciously curious voice. "Raoul's wild! We all knew that he was mad about her, but ever since the engagement was announced, he's been dropping hints—not exactly that either—but saying suggestive, sarcastic things about the fickleness of women and the blindness of men that would lead one to believe——"

"And last night at dinner——" broke in another voice. "It was late, and we were all pretty well lit, but Raoul wasn't beyond knowing what he said, and he made some sort of a bet that the marriage would never come off."

"He had no business to do that. No matter what's back of it, he ought to shut up in public!" growled Tonio. "There's nothing in it but jealousy, anyway. Lolita is my cousin as much as his, and I'm not going to stand for anything more!"

"Tonio's right!" Ernesto seconded his brother. "She's a deuced fine girl,

and Raoul was roaring drunk. Forget it, fellows."

"Nobody wants to deny that she's the loveliest girl in town and that we all have the Englishman. *Viva, Lolita bonitissima!* Let's drink her health!"

All of this was thoroughly distasteful and irritating to Cecil; but when he came to analyze the words, there was in them nothing tangible beyond the fact, which he already knew, that Lolita was greatly coveted by her cousin, Raoul. Had he left then, all might still have been well, but unfortunately he lingered, nursing his grievances and dreading, yet hoping, to hear something further, until the Panamaian party broke up and scattered, leaving only Ernesto and Tonio in the bower of foliage.

And then came the actual blow, for Tonio said, earnestly and as if he had waited for that purpose, as, indeed, he had:

"We must stop Raoul's babbling." His tones were low, but sibilant and distinct. "There's no sense in letting him mess things up with a scandal now—particularly as Markham's a decent sort, and the girl's satisfied. All the same, I believe that he has some excuse. Don't you remember how he and Lolita were always sneaking around together that last summer in the savannas—before we all went off to school?"

"That's so," responded Ernesto. "I was too much of a kid to think much about it then, but I do recall that we caught them once coming out of the woods together, and another time, late at night, coming down from the old pavilion. Possibly——"

"Yes, possibly," agreed Tonio, with a laugh. "But that's no reason for spoiling things now. And any one can see where Lolita's present interests lie! We'd better be getting on. It's about time to dress, if we're going to Raoul's *sancocho*."

When he was certain that the two

young Amados had left the club, Cecil deserted his post and hastened to the suite which he occupied in the British legation. He was in a towering rage and one of a dual nature, which so shook and divided him that he knew not how to act. The Latin half of him was on fire with jealousy, while, at the same time, the English half of him was cold with resentment over the possibility that he was being deceived and made a fool of. Instinctively his heart jumped to the conclusion that the worst was true, while his mind argued that there might be nothing in it and that the girl was at least entitled to a hearing. Next came grief and a hurt sense of injustice that his wonderful illusion of perfection should have been shattered so early—all of which was eventually swallowed up in an immense desire to see Lolita, combined with the illogical feeling that, if he could but hold her closely enough in his arms, facts would somehow right themselves.

It was in this last mood of heart-breaking anticipation that Cecil finally presented himself at the Pizas' dinner—only to be met by Señora Ibañez with the news that Lolita had seemed so ill that it had been deemed wise to leave her to the ministrations of Ignacia, in order that she might recover sufficiently to attend the larger ball the next evening.

This was intolerable! How he got through the dinner, Cecil never knew; every moment of it was torture, and as soon as the dancing began, he slipped away, without attempting an excuse.

In a torrid, consuming fury of impatience, such as he had never before known, Cecil flung himself into a *coche* and had himself driven to the vicinity of Lolita's home. There he dismissed the *cochero* and approached the house on foot. He knew that his intention was an impossible one from the Panamaian point of view, and yet he was

firmly determined to see Lolita alone that evening. He would bribe the servants; he would break in, if necessary; but he simply could not live throughout the night without the solace which she alone could give.

The sight of the Ibañez' front door made him pause. How best to proceed? What plan to pursue? Engrossed with these questions, he stood for a moment in the shadow of a neighboring building, with his eyes fixed upon the door that stood impertinently between him and surcease from pain.

And then, suddenly and quite unexpectedly, it opened, and a little figure stepped out—a slender female form, wrapped in an all-enveloping black *manta*. It might have been any one of the maids, but Cecil felt instantly that it was not. Something tugged at his heart when the little muffled shape stole, stealthily and shrinkingly, away toward the town, and he knew that it was Lolita.

Although she was entirely covered by the *manta* and the little black mask that she wore over her face, the girl kept as much as possible in the shadows. It was terrible to see the bright, proud little creature slinking like a criminal. Every now and again, she glanced timidly over her shoulder, but, while he followed, Cecil kept far behind, and she failed to recognize him.

The girl went far, walking with rapid, frightened steps—an interminable distance, it seemed—and came to a halt at last before an old iron gate, flanked by dingy shops. Through its grilling, at the end of a passage, might be seen a small patio, where several palms stood guard around a broken-nosed fountain nymph. Above the gate hung a cracked iron bell, from which dangled a fraying rope. Raising her hand, Lolita gave the cord a resolute pull and then leaped like a startled fawn at the resultant jangle.

The interval of inaction that ensued

seemed endless. People and *coches* passed carelessly back and forth; the life of the shabby, picturesque little city went on; but for Cecil, crouched in an ancient, overhanging doorway on the opposite side of the street, nothing existed except the girl who clung, like a tiny black ghost of happiness, to the bars of the tall black gate.

At last there appeared an old man, bearing a lighted lantern, with whom Lolita held some converse. Cecil could not hear what was said, but he saw the girl's hand slip through the space between two wrought-iron flowers to meet the man's; after which the gate swung open, and the house swallowed her from view.

What he had seen was enough, for the piece was not unknown to Cecil; but he could not tear himself away.

In, perhaps, a half hour after Lolita had disappeared, a large car drew up with a flourish before the grilled entrance, and Raoul leaped out. The shuffling old servant came promptly in answer to the well-known, importunate ring, the boy dashed impatiently inside, and again the great gate was shut, with a clang that rang against Cecil's ears like a prophecy of doom.

An hour went by, and still Lolita had not returned, and still Cecil stood, like a statue of stone, beneath the crumbling stucco arch.

CHAPTER VIII.

"Holy Virgin, it is the only way that I can think of! Help me, I beg of thee! Let me find the things and get safely away, and I will give thee—I will give thee my bracelet of pearls! Help me—help me!"

So Lolita prayed, as she stumbled up the stairs in the wake of the aged porter. After unlocking the door to Raoul's rooms and setting down the lantern, the old man withdrew and left the girl alone. It was no uncommon

thing for veiled women to visit the young gentlemen who occupied the various apartments in the quaint old house, the walls of which bounded his world, and, his cupidity satisfied, the *concierge* was content to ask no questions.

When his footsteps had died away, Lolita picked up the lantern and peered cautiously around, her mind intent on one problem alone—where to find the letters and the silk sash with her name embroidered on it.

In a panic of despair, she had ventured all on a desperate chance. Fate had flung her the opportunity upon this, the last night that Raoul had given her for action. Her mother had insisted that she remain at home, and her father had happened to mention that her cousin was giving another of his fast-becoming-notorious stag parties in the savannas that evening. It was highly improbable, therefore, that Raoul would return before morning. He had admitted, also, that his father would give him no support, which meant that her letters were all that he had to give weight to his words. If these could be eliminated, nothing that Raoul could say would be of any avail. His statements would be reduced to boomerangs, rebounding to his own destruction. Having borne her bitter knowledge alone, there remained for Lolita nothing to do but to work out her own salvation.

The idea of stealing the incriminating evidence came to the girl as an eleventh-hour inspiration. Throughout the terrible three days that had elapsed since the receipt of Raoul's letter, she had foraged in the depths of her mind for some solution of her problem without success. With her entire capacity concentrated on the necessity of keeping Cecil, she had yet been unable to formulate a plan that would prevent her from losing him. Either she must seem to desert him or she must let

him learn the secret that would cause him to desert her. The thought that he might know and still forgive her never once entered her mind. She knew that she stood outside the pale, when judged by the standards that men such as the Englishmen erect for their wives.

Drenched in tragedy, it was no wonder that she had looked white and sick. But, lying in bed on the evening of her last day of grace, a sudden forlorn hope had come to her, and, with everything to gain and little left to lose, she had taken the risk and had progressed thus far in the execution of her daring.

Raoul's chambers consisted of two large rooms and a smaller one, in which stood only a wardrobe and a tin bath. His *muchacho* slept somewhere in the lower regions of the establishment. Feverishly Lolita began her search, beginning with an antique mahogany *secrtaire*, which struck her as being the most likely place of concealment. Piece by piece, she ransacked the furniture, cupboards, and drawers.

Finding nothing in the sitting room, Lolita went on to the bedroom and there repeated the process, leaving a wake of disorder as she advanced. But the second room yielded no more than the first had done.

Last, she entered the little room containing the bath. Here there was but one place to look. Tearing open the wardrobe, Lolita gave a sob of relief, for there on its floor, left carelessly unlatched, as if the owner had been called suddenly away while in the act of examining its contents, stood a large dispatch box.

With trembling fingers, the girl raised the black enameled lid. Yes, there was a bundle of letters, which she recognized at a glance as her own, and beside them, amid a litter of torn wrappings and broken seals, lay the blue sash of her childhood, dropped hastily and left crumpled in the dark.

A wave of pity for the little girl that she had been swept over Lolita, making her, for a brief space, forget the sorrows and perplexities of the girl she had become. Why was everything so complicated? From the beginning to the end, she had had no thought of evil, or of aught but the wish for happiness; yet was she snared in a malignant net of intrigue, which drew closer and closer in an effort to crush out her joy.

And this brought her back to the consciousness that the fight was on. With a start, she emerged from the fog of memories into the light of her present need. Hastily thrusting the articles under her *manta*, she turned toward the door, passed through the bedroom with a quick, inaudible step, and entered the sitting room, carrying the lantern in her hand.

A man who had been fumbling after a switch gave a startled exclamation as she appeared.

"What the devil!"

"Raoul!" gasped the girl.

In a spasm of terror, her hand relaxed its grip, the lantern fell, extinguishing its candle, and the room became dark. Frantically, Lolita plunged in the direction of the outer door. But the man's hand had found the button, and black was turned to white as eight bulbs blazed out in a crystal chandelier.

Had she remembered her mask, Lolita might still have made some play for escape, but for this she was too frightened and unprepared. Forgetting entirely that he could not immediately identify her, she stood dumbly, while Raoul, with a quick stride and eager for adventure, reached her side and, with a reckless, drunken laugh, laid hold of her arm and tore the lace from her face.

"Lolita!"

For a second, he shared her fear. Feverish with wine and suspense and reared in superstitious belief, she

seemed to him an apparition conjured up by his yearning fancy. He fell back a pace and gazed at her with incredulity. But only for a moment. There was no mistaking her reality and, instinctively, he placed himself between her and the door, demanding breathlessly:

"Why art thou here? For what hast thou come?"

Lolita remained silent, too strangled with consternation to speak.

The faint, false spark of hope that had flared for an instant in Raoul's breast flickered and went out. His wits were not slow, and before he had finished asking, he knew the answer.

"Thou didst think to take away the letters and the sash? Ha—it was for those very things that I have myself returned, driving like fury all of the way from the villa, because those fools out there would not believe——"

"Raoul, thou hast dared to boast to thy friends?" Scorn gave her courage, and Lolita's voice came clear and scourging.

"Only that I would win thee in the end," he admitted sulkily. "I have not told them—yet, but the time is up," he added, shifting his gaze unsteadily before her accusing look.

Eye to eye, they measured each other—the beautiful girl, whose white face glowed like a moonlit lily meshed in the web of her *manta*, and the handsome youth in evening clothes, whose well-cut mouth sagged with deliberate dissipation and whose shirt front was stained with wine. Cousins, who had played together in infancy and had loved in childhood, they glared at each other now like strangers meeting in deadliest enmity.

To Raoul, Lolita was no longer herself, but a thief, come to rob him of his rights. To the girl, Raoul was a monster, a fiend, come to snatch away her triumph just as it lay within her grasp. Each saw in the other, for the

moment, only an instrument of frustration, curiously impersonal.

Angrily Raoul sprang upon the girl and wrenched at the material in which she had wound herself so tightly that she looked like a column of onyx. Wildly Lolita struggled, as the folds of her *manta* loosened, striking out with her little fists, biting, tearing, clinging to her spoils—until a wrist, bent ruthlessly backward, made her release them with a cry of pain.

Both the packet and the sash fell to the floor. With a laugh that rang like an exultant crow, Raoul caught them up and brandished them aloft. In the scrimmage, the two had been as sexless as babies—tropical savages quarreling over a bone; that was all. Now, vanquished and helpless, like a beaten beast, Lolita moved toward the door. Raoul made no protest, but eyed her tauntingly, gloating over his trophies. She might have departed so, and only after she had gone would Raoul have recollected and regretted a lost opportunity. It was Lolita herself who, with a will still groping after Cecil and unthinking of her danger, intruded her personality upon the boy.

Admitting defeat, yet finding it unendurable, she turned at the final moment, fell upon her knees, and burst into tears.

"Raoul—Raoul," she wailed, "I can not give him up—I can not! Have mercy—have pity and return the things to me! If thou dost not, I shall die!"

She stretched out her arms toward him; great rainbow-glittering drops rolled down her blanched cheeks. She was appealing and exquisite, as only the very young and lovely can be when they weep.

And now, indeed, Raoul quivered with the knowledge of her presence.

"Canst not comprehend, Lolita," he responded, "that even as thou lovest Markham, I love thee? Why dost thou

ask of me a thing which thou hast just said is impossible for thee?"

"Because, Raoul—if it were for his happiness, I think I could let him go. And thy generosity could give everything to me, while nothing that I could do would turn my love to thee. When we were children together, I trusted thee, not knowing that I was throwing away the joy of my life. Wilt make me pay all the price of the kisses I gave? Thou canst not be so cruel—thou canst not! I will forgive thee all the torment I have suffered. I will bless thee forever in my prayers. I will hold thee forever in my heart as the giver of my good. Thou hast naught to gain but vengeance for a woe for which I am not to blame. It is unworthy of thee! *Ay*, Raoul, thou canst not torture me so! Give them back to me!" and again her hands went out.

Sobered and softened, Raoul looked down at her; and while he stared, the situation changed, for hunger woke—not the dull, gnawing ache that was with him always now, driving him to deeds of license for the sake of forgetfulness, but a violent surge of longing for immediate possession—an urge that swept away reason and consideration of consequences. The significance of their isolation flooded his soul. The tiny, tantalizing butterfly that had danced so long beyond his frenzied reach was here alone with him—in the hollow of his hand—completely in his power. The sudden realization intoxicated him. The atmosphere of indulgence with which his apartment reeked engulfed them both. The circumstances were identical with those of scores of amorous, unbridled nights in which lesser caprices had played a part. He had not denied himself then; why should he deny himself now, when she who knelt before him summed his heart's desire? Why should he ever let her go from here? Wild imaginings—yet simple, as

great wishes always are—chased themselves through his fuddled brain.

He tossed the precious articles carelessly upon a table and, without warning, drew the girl roughly to her feet and into his arms.

"*Lolita—Lolita*," he breathed, between clenched teeth, "I adore thee! Thou art mine! I could smother thee! I could kill thee! I will drown thee with kisses! I will—I will!"

With all her feeble might, the girl fought in his embrace. Overwhelmed by a new and unforeseen danger, she for a time forgot the old. The primal fear of woman seized her. Raoul lost all individuality; he incarnated the eternal hunter, the man who would possess her against her will.

The new struggle differed from the old. That had been a settlement of rights; this was a clash of love and loathing. Locked in combat, they consumed each other, one with hot hatred, the other with mad fire. The more fiercely she resisted, the higher mounted the man's determination to force her. He was laughing now—short, crazed, guttural laughs, like the jeering of an animal.

"I will have thee to-night! Thou canst go to thy Englishman then! What does it matter whom thou lovest? It is I who will tame the bride! Canst have the letters and the sash when I have done with thee!"

Quite beside himself, inch by inch, he propelled her toward the couch. Lolita felt its edge strike the backs of her knees. There was no way out; her screams meant nothing to the deaf old porter and, while her mind was capable of thought, she did not scream, remembering what discovery would mean to her. Even in her terror, the image of Cecil obsessed her mind. In her direst extremity, the sense of the words that Raoul had uttered seeped into her brain. He had offered to restore to her the letters and the sash—

after she had paid the age-old price. The offer had been unconscious on his part, a trick of the tongue, wagged by his passion; but, even now, could she bargain, and, if he made a promise, would he keep it? Escape from the present catastrophe being impossible, could she buy, with a semblance of patience, some peace for the future, and then, with a lifetime of devotion, wipe out the wrong to her beloved that would be perpetrated not by, but through her? Could she?

"Raoul!" Lolita's voice was so changed that it stayed her captor before he could press her down upon the blue-brocaded lounge.

"Well?" The interruption verged on the ridiculous.

"Raoul—if I will make no further protest—wilt thou restore to me the things and let me go?"

"Yes, yes!" Jolted from the heights, he scarcely knew what he said, was conscious only of a desire to reclaim his exaltation of abandonment. Holding her in a grip like a vise, his greedy lips sought hers.

"Cecil," murmured Lolita, "forgive! I love thee! I love thee! I can do no more. Forgive!"

And something, it seemed, must have heard and answered her prayer; for, throwing back his head, so that his eyes might scan her face, Raoul saw that it was the face of a martyr, white and still and filmed with an immense aloofness beyond disgust.

The sight was too much. As if pierced by an arrow, desire passed, leaving only an anger that such intensity should die. Baffled by her submission, as he had been inflamed by her retreat, Raoul sprang aside.

"Go!" he commanded hoarsely. "Take thy things and get out!" In a fury at his own impotence, he gave her a push that sent her staggering.

It was a change that Lolita could scarcely understand; but, finding her-

self free, she snatched up the coveted articles and fled. At the door she looked back, womanlike, and opened her lips to speak—probably a word of gratitude, banal, from the boy's point of view.

"Go!" he thundered, and started toward her with hand upraised.

Like a scared rabbit, she scuttled from the room and down the stairs, running blindly until brought up sharply by the closed gate. Grasping its bars, she shook and hammered upon it until the porter was aroused. Taking her second state of hysteria as calmly as he had her first, the old man leisurely turned his ponderous key in the rusty lock and let her into the night.

Once on the street, Lolita fairly flew, her feet winged with relief, until she reached her own door. Her parents had not returned and, after an interval of palpitation, Lolita slept the sleep of the exhausted, drifting into oblivion quite unconscious of the fact that, cavered beneath an ancient arch, Cecil stood stupidly until dawn, gazing, rapt and fascinated, into the blankness of his future; while up in Raoul's apartment a completely sobered black-eyed boy—who was, after all, only twenty and very much in love—sobbed his heart out, lying prone upon his bed.

CHAPTER IX.

A noonday sun glared hot and brazen when Lolita opened her eyes on Saturday morning, but her pink-shaded room retained something of the fresh breezes of the night. Blithely she greeted Ignacia, who brought her coffee, and merrily, with splashing and singing, did she make her toilet, feeling herself triumphant and something of a super-woman to have come scatheless through such abundant difficulties.

That Cecil neither came to breakfast nor sent an excuse was both sur-

prising and disappointing, but in no wise alarming. His duties—both to his government and to his father's business—did occasionally claim him even at this time, and their reunion at the ball that evening would compensate them for a wasted day. Lolita looked forward to her next meeting with her lover as to something uniquely precious, for then, for the first time, could she greet him with a sense of security.

Nor was the day quite wasted for her, for during the afternoon, an important feat was performed. Shutting herself into her own room, Lolita made a single package of the sash, the packet of letters, and the gold-tooled diary that contained Raoul's end of their correspondence; after which she slipped down into the kitchen, where, with her own hands, she stuffed the bundle into a charcoal brazier, lighted it, and watched it burn until nothing was left but a mound of charred gray ash. Indulgent, but curious, a circle of black servants gathered around their young mistress and received, with sympathy and giggling comprehension, her explanation that these were souvenirs of childish follies, which she wished to destroy before her marriage.

The afternoon passed quickly and, feeling that there was now no barrier between herself and happiness, Lolita prepared for the ball in an ecstasy of delight.

In spite of their frequency, the regular bimonthly assemblies of the Tivoli Club—given always at the Tivoli, the huge American hotel erected by the United States government during the early stages of work on the canal—were among the largest and gayest events of the season. For here the best of all of the smaller circles and cliques met together—Panamaians, American military men and engineers, the representatives of all of the legations, and the tourists and other transients residing in the big hostelries. The

enormous rooms were always festively decorated with palm leaves and flowers, the punch was never lacking in the ingredients required for the production of mirth and good cheer, and the supper was invariably a substantial and elaborate one. These balls—during the winter months, at least—could, therefore, be counted upon to be fairly brilliant, cosmopolitan, and satisfying, and Lolita knew very well that upon few occasions would she be more conspicuous than upon this, her initial appearance after the sending out of the invitations to her marriage.

Her toilet was, in consequence, an affair of even more than usual moment. Closeted with Ignacia, its rites began a full three hours before the time set for departure. Bit by bit, they worked over her lovely body, concealing all fancied defects and enhancing, with all manner of subtle artifices, the already marvelously alluring best points, until they had built up a pink-and-pearl, perfected Lolita, as finished as the rarest hothouse rose.

All dewy and bubbling with anticipation, she tripped into the carriage and sat demurely, fluffed out like a powder puff, between Señor and Señora Ibañez.

Beneath the porte-cochère, upon their arrival, they encountered the carriage of the Elias, from which Amelia was just descending, and, joining forces, the two parties entered the hotel together. A little buzz of interest and admiration went around as they crossed the foyer. Already, strangers craned their necks to catch glimpses of the pretty prospective bride.

In the dressing room, Lolita was distracted from her preening by the gush of congratulations that fell upon her from all sides. Girlishly she lingered, enjoying it all and feeling just a trifle shy of the moment when she must greet Cecil before the curious eyes of the public.

Señoras Ibañez and Elia watched her indulgently, and finally, taking her between them, led her—like two very grand court ladies supporting a little princess—out into the ballroom.

Yes, there was Cecil, at the far end of the hall, standing beside the British minister, with a group of other Britishers about him. How distinguished and severe and how very English he looked! Lolita's heart gave a thump of pride and almost awe. It was so very wonderful that, out of all the women in the world, he should have chosen her to be his wife. And now she could be so fearlessly and without the dread of a disgrace that would reflect upon him.

It was strange that he was not watching more closely—that he did not immediately see and come to meet her. That was so unlike him. Still, the room was very long, and there were many persons and pillars intervening. By the time she had traversed half the distance, he would have started, his face alight with the look of welcome that he reserved for her alone.

Slowly the three ladies made their gracious way, nodding, smiling, and greeting, first on this side and then on that. It was like the progress of royalty. They had almost come up to Cecil, and still he had not stirred. It was extraordinary! Señora Ibañez and Amelia exchanged quick glances of perplexity and annoyance over Lolita's little head. The girl kept her eyes upon Cecil and scarcely heeded any one else. Now they stood directly in front of him, and still he made no sign of recognition, but continued his apparently absorbing conversation with Sir William, the kindly British minister.

It was an embarrassing moment for which the young man should be taken severely to task, Señora Ibañez decided.

"Cecil!" The word was a command, spoken in a voice thinly edged with exasperation.

Mr. Markham turned blandly, put up his glass, and surveyed the three ladies with a haughty English stare; then quietly resumed his talk with Sir William.

But the old gentleman, gallant and nonplused, protested concernedly:

"Cecil, my dear chap, what the deuce— Have you gone blind? Here's your fiancée, you know."

Once more Cecil set his monocle in his eye and scanned the girl, who trembled so that she would have fallen had not the arms of her mother and Amelia upheld her.

"Oh—ah?" he declared, with his most exaggerated and asinine English drawl. "I believe it's the young woman whom I saw coming out of Raoul Amado's apartment at midnight last night—but I don't happen to have the honor of knowing her. Let's have a drink, what?"

Lolita never knew how she got out of the ballroom. Long afterward, she had an indistinct recollection of being bundled into a carriage and jolted for miles over rough cobbles, propped between an indefinite number of swaying individuals, who all spoke at once and in very loud and angry tones. Through the blinding mist of her tears, nothing was visible; but the echo of her father's curses and the crack of the *cochero's* whip returned to her ears for years, whenever she was driven over the streets of Panama at night.

Her next impression was that of the comfort of sinking into the softness of her own little bed. Some one had undressed her. She still could not see anything, except a glare of light, which created pain without illuminating objects; and the clamor and confusion of violent chatter all about her hurt her head.

"I want Amelia!" she murmured; and immediately the solace of cool arms encircled her, and the familiar perfume of Amelia's creamy laces re-

assured her nostrils. Every one else went away and, in the soothing relief of silence, the little broken-winged butterfly poured out her confession to the great, beautiful, broken-hearted woman who held her like a child against her breast.

When, quite exhausted, Lolita's sobs and broken words ceased, and her panting breaths had grown more regular, Amelia laid her tenderly down among her lace-frilled pillows. But it was morning before Señora Elia left the room, and when she did so, not only Señora Ibañez, but a doctor and a nurse, had taken her place.

For Lolita—with no hope left, and with her secret scattered to the mischievous winds of the world—longed only for peace, and had gone far upon the road toward obtaining it.

CHAPTER X.

Weeks slipped by, and still Lolita lay in her bed, neither knowing nor caring who came and went.

The day after the Tivoli ball, Amelia sent a little note to Cecil, asking him to call upon her. The Englishman replied with a courteous, but positive refusal. Putting pride in her pocket, she wrote again—a longer letter, in which she made a sublime appeal for justice tempered with mercy, and begged Cecil to permit her to tell him the truth. To this Mr. Markham vouchsafed no reply whatsoever, and Amelia did not write again.

The news traveled the length of the Isthmus, of course, and the whole of Panama was divided into two factions—one siding with the Englishman and what it chose to call the proprieties, and one with Lolita and what it was pleased to term romance. All were united, however, in believing that the girl had gone to Raoul's rooms to keep a last lover's tryst—all, that is, except the immediate members of her family,

to whom Amelia had told her tale in a way that they could not fail to credit. Their protestations and explanations were quite naturally, however, received by the world as the praiseworthy and to-be-expected attempts of parents to protect their daughter's good name. As such they were valued, but as nothing more.

Rallying to her defense, the girl's younger kinsfolk would have wreaked physical vengeance upon Cecil, but being restrained from that by their elders, they swaggered about, showing themselves everywhere and making a hero of Raoul, who, to do him justice, bore this phase shamefacedly and did nothing to encourage it. He even retracted most of the scandalous hints he had thrown out in the past.

Formal notice was sent to all the invited guests that the wedding had been indefinitely postponed on account of Lolita's sudden and severe illness; but, as it was impossible to notify him in time to prevent his sailing, Sir Barrett Markham arrived on the appointed boat. He listened to his son's stilted and reserved account of the pathetic fiasco with a sympathy genuine enough, but equally stilted and reservedly phrased. The English veneration for decorum—which meant first of all a strict avoidance of anything approaching a scene—made them both shy of any open disclosure of emotion; so their talk merely scratched the surface of the matter, before passing on to other things.

Sir Barrett firmly refused, both on the grounds of expediency and of good sportsmanship, to permit his son's matrimonial mishaps to influence his business affairs, and, having it thus put to him, Cecil stood with his father. This attitude brought about a curious and, to an outsider, a comical train of inconsistencies; for, while stubbornly disdaining to countenance each other socially and remaining haughtily aloof

upon all public occasions, the English and Panamaian elements yet met in conference each morning and there discussed, with the utmost urbanity, the details of the formation of the new company. And so united were their interests in this respect that neither of them could afford to block the other.

In a couple of weeks, the financial and political transactions having been arranged to the satisfaction of all concerned, Sir Barrett returned to England. His son longed to accompany him, but his application for a transfer had not yet received the attention of his government, and he was kept, therefore, tied to his post in the British legation.

As the weeks developed into months, the hubbub of gossip that had followed the Tivoli sensation died away, and new scandals arose.

Lolita's condition began to improve, and, following the advice of their physician, Señor and Señora Ibañez removed the girl to their cottage on the island of Taboga, where it was hoped that she might more rapidly recover her strength.

Although his transfer was eventually promised, it was slow in materializing, and Cecil remained fixed in Panama. His life, now, had settled into a dreary routine. He stretched his diplomatic and business engagements to cover as much time as possible, showed up at the various clubs about as usual—a bit more correct and unapproachable, perhaps—attended such social functions as he must, and spent the rest of his hours alone, pretending to read, walking, or riding, but brooding always.

A slow change was taking place in the young Englishman, who had slammed the doors of his heart with such irrevocable and conventional British rudeness. Indulging himself in unaccustomed solitude, he began, at length, to think along unwonted lines

—to tread paths somewhat divergent from those fine, traditional thought ways which he had trod unquestioningly heretofore.

There arrived moments when the loneliness with which he had hemmed himself in became unbearable, and as such times grew more and more frequent, he began to wonder if, after all, there was anything intrinsically sound in the motives that had driven him to cast off the girl he loved. Her great, hurt, incredulous dark eyes haunted the hours when he courted sleep. He had never given her a chance to explain. And then—later and more miraculous—came the thought: What difference if there were no explanation? Was it not folly to put away a love that was plainly his merely because it might once have belonged to another? Had his own life been such as to give him the right to demand of his mate that her early years should all have been spent in waiting and preparing for him? Where and why had men gained that presumption? All of which was heresy, engendered by the heat and the love urge of the tropics, he told himself.

Nevertheless, these thoughts persisted. Sometimes, in his dreams, it seemed to him that the beautiful little French mother whom he had so worshiped, and who had died some years before, came and spoke to him sweetly, telling him that love was neither of the past nor of the future, but of the present—a precious thing, to seize upon when it came and to hold as long as one could. Outwardly as coldly stern as ever, inwardly Cecil seethed with the burning, ever-growing knowledge that his pain was self-inflicted.

And then, one evening, strolling with a cigar upon the Bovedas, he heard his name called softly and, looking up, saw Señora Elia standing alone among the moon-silvered birds and flowers upon her balcony.

With his hat in his hand, he answered her summons.

"You have been a long time coming," she reproached him gently.

"I have been a long time learning," he answered her humbly. "But now, I beg of you, if you have any comfort to give me—give it! How is she?"

"She is growing much, much stronger. She can run and swim and play again—but she is changed. It seems as if the fairies have stolen away her woman's soul and left her more than ever a little child. She is like moonlight—a pagan sprite without a heart. She laughs again at little things—the gambols of her kitten, the antics of boys on the beach—but her laugh makes one wish to weep. She seems to have forgotten, yet retains the sadness of love—like a pink shell that holds the rumble of surf long after it has left the sea."

"Surely she will recover from that condition!"

"Not until love shows her the way."

With her deep-toned, slightly husky voice, Amelia played upon the chords of Cecil's emotions as upon a harp. Lolita stood before him, laughing in sadness upon the sands. He moved ever so slightly, and his hand went up to his eyes as Amelia went on. Briefly she told him the story that Lolita had told to her and, while he listened, Cecil's mind and heart ran the gamut of thought and feeling. Love, hatred, passion, vengeance, approval, contempt—all these flowed in and out, for Lolita, for Raoul, for himself, until there was left only an immense pity for all of them—a great, overwhelming charity for the snarl that men make of their lives.

"What can I do? How can I atone?" he asked simply, when she had done.

"That I can not tell you," answered Amelia. "Only, if you love her, you will find a way. But do not think of atoning. Think of loving, instead."

Cecil wrote all night and in the morning tore up what he had written and started for Taboga in a chartered launch.

He found the Ibañez' cottage without difficulty, but was denied admittance by the servants. All day he hung about, hoping to see the girl emerge, but she did not come.

In the evening, a note was brought to him, where he lingered in the White House *cantina*. It said, in the decisive handwriting of Señor Ibañez, that Mr. Markham was requested to leave the island at once, as Señorita Ibañez would upon no account consent to see him, nor would she leave the house until assured of his departure, so that her health was endangered by his presence.

Cecil replied with a hastily scrawled, but importunate letter, in which he fairly groveled with repentance, and begged the father of Lolita to permit him to see the girl long enough to ask her forgiveness.

Señor Ibañez answered—through the medium of a small, naked brown messenger—that it was quite impossible for Mr. Markham ever to hold converse with his daughter again, and that the only way in which Mr. Markham could now show a desire for atonement was by leaving the island that night.

In despair, Cecil did as he was asked and the next day mailed a fervent, impassioned letter from Panama, addressed to Lolita herself.

This letter was returned with its seal intact.

Cecil then betook himself to Amelia for sympathy and instruction, and she advised him to wait patiently until the Ibañez should return to Panama, which, she was informed, they would very soon do.

Her information was verified, for in a few days, Cecil saw, *en passant*, that the home of his beloved had been

opened and was undergoing a thorough renovation.

Thus encouraged, he bided his time.

CHAPTER XI.

Three months had passed since the spectacular termination of Lolita's engagement. Her nervous breakdown had been a critical one, but the weeks in Taboga had accomplished much, and it now seemed to Señor and Señora Ibañez that the time had come when—for the vindication of the family and in order that her own nipped social life should not become entirely withered—Lolita should resume her place in society.

The girl accepted their plans with surface placidity. She had reached a stage of fundamental apathy, overlaid with superficial flippancy—or, rather, with an elfinlike lightness that kept her floating above impressions. The flame that had so nearly consumed her and had made her callous to all but itself had seemingly burned itself out. Also, her girlish pride and powers of resistance had at last been aroused. Instead of shrinking, as at first, from the thought of reappearance, she was now quite stimulated by it and, indeed, looked forward to the time when she would face down the shame of public rejection with flaunted frivolity. Outwardly, it was a healthy reaction, but her inner passivity remained too profound to be quite normal. The ache in her heart still smoldered, although smothered beyond recognition—even by herself.

Lolita agreed with her parents in choosing the field of her defeat to be the battleground of her renewed struggle for triumph and, after a few quiet days, during which they received only intimates, the evening arrived upon which Lolita would reappear at a Tivoli Club ball. Her youth was scarcely equal to the strain, but her beauty was

sufficiently supreme to carry her through it.

What she received amounted almost to an ovation. Her kinsfolk had turned out in full force to help her, and even strangers were impressed by the radiant courage of the little creature. Dancing, flirting, chattering, the evening waned.

Cecil, meanwhile, was having a bad time of it. He had made several further attempts to get in touch with Lolita, during the short interval since her return to the city, but had, each time, been repulsed. Whether this were the will of the girl, or only of her parents, he had no means of discovering. As the evening of the ball approached, all sorts of schemes had reviewed themselves in his mind. He, too, had recognized the coincidence of opportunity, but had been unable to decide how to make use of it. Were he merely to present himself and to attempt to speak to her, he would undoubtedly receive, reversed, the rebuff that he himself had given. And what would be gained by that?

Yet, more and more, the idea stayed with him that he must in some way take back in public the blow that he had publicly dealt. The notion was fantastic, impossible, un-English, but whenever he thought of it, it seemed to him that the wistful little French mother who had somehow become the protectress of the girl whom he had injured—yes, he called it that now—looked down and smiled.

Although he had managed to catch a few hurried glimpses of her, Cecil had not seen Lolita closely since the night of their rupture, and when he dressed himself for the ball, it was with all the care of a youth in his teens.

But, having had himself driven to the hotel, he lacked the courage to enter. The trial that he had inflicted upon Lolita seemed too great to be borne when he contemplated inflicting

it upon himself. He had not the assurance to carry it through decently. The whole world seemed to be made up of eyes. As his torture of indecision grew, so did his pity for the girl. And so, too, did his longing for atonement. And yet he could not act.

Throughout the entire evening, he prowled about the immense gallery that encircled the hotel, peered in at the windows, dodged acquaintances, took little spurts down the drive, thrust his head furtively into the foyer and withdrew it again, and behaved altogether—as he put it—"like a bally ass."

The ball was almost over; his opportunity was practically gone, and yet he could not nerve himself to walk boldly in.

People began to pass out onto the front gallery. The drive beneath the porte-cochère was jammed with carriages. The greater part of the brilliant gathering had now congregated—in laughing, parting groups—upon the verandas and steps.

Crushed in among the crowd, Cecil waited breathlessly, his eyes on the door.

At last she emerged, laughing, pale, incredibly lovely, and walking, as he had last seen her, between her mother and Amelia, but followed now by a pack of eager men. Ostentatiously her carriage drew up at the foot of the steps. One tiny foot was outthrust, ready to descend.

Suddenly she turned her laughing face full toward Cecil. It was impossible to doubt that she saw him. Her face grew a shade paler, perhaps, but she gave no other sign; there was no apparent effort at self-control, and her flow of banter did not cease.

Then it seemed to Cecil that his mother stood at his ear, whispering, "My son, this is your last chance." Her little fluttering, ghostly French hands pressed at his back, urging him on.

Cecil dashed forward and threw himself at Lolita's feet.

"Oh, Lolita," he cried out, in a voice so loud that all might hear, "what I said was a lie! I was mad with jealousy, and I did not wait to learn the truth! I know now that it was all a mistake. Can you forgive?"

Lolita gazed down at the kneeling figure with a dazed, troubled expression, as if she were taking part in a play and had forgotten her cue.

All about the two, the shimmering circle of silk and jewels, striped with masculine black, wavered and gasped in hushed expectancy. Far down below them, at the foot of the hill, lay the bay, like a moonlit sapphire, on the breast of the earth. The clustered masses of flowering vines that fretted the screens of the gallery swayed softly, wafting their perfume, like a magic cloak, all about them. The black, cockaded horses champed at their bits, and their silver harness chinked in the silence. It was like a scene in a fairy book, painted in pastel colors and merged in the glow where the carnival lights and the moonlight met.

Suddenly Lolita brushed her hand across her brow and opened her eyes, straining them wide like a little child that wakes from a dream.

"Cecil!" she said, with a sort of wondering, welcoming surprise, while quietly her hand went out to him. Then her eyes wandered and took in the watching throng. Proudly her chin went up, while mechanically her mother and Amelia fell back. "Come," she commanded softly, and drew Cecil to his feet.

Without another word, slowly and very stately, as became a little princess, she descended the steps, leading by the hand the consort whom she had chosen. With the same elegant leisureliness, she entered her carriage, and, like a somnambulist, Cecil followed her.

"Drive on!" Lolita directed the *cochero*, in a clear, low voice.

The man cast an uncertain look at Señor and Señora Ibañez, who stood spellbound among the spectators on the steps.

"Drive on!" repeated Lolita, and the coachman did as he was bid.

So the little princess passed royally into the night, while the sigh that went up from her subjects rang like a cheer.



CRETONNE TROPICS

THE cretonne in your willow chair
Shows, through a zone of rosy air,
A tree of parrots, agate-eyed,
With blue-green crests and plumes of pride
And beaks most formidably curved.
I hear the river, silver-nerved,
To their shrill protests make reply,
And the palm forest stir and sigh.
Curious, the spell that colors cast,
Binding the fancy cobweb-fast,
And you would smile if you could know
I like your cretonne parrots so!
But I have seen them sail toward night
Superbly homeward, the last light
Lifting them like a purple sea
Scorned and made use of arrogantly;
And I have heard them cry aloud
From out a tall palm's emerald cloud;
And I brought home a brilliant feather,
Lost like a flake of sunset weather.

Here in the north the sea is white
And mother-of-pearl in morning light,
Quite lovely, but there is a glare
That daunts me.

Now the willow chair
Suggests a more perplexing sea,
Till my heart aches with memory
And parrots dye the air around,
And I forget the pallid Sound.

GRACE HAZARD CONKLING.



People and Things

By Sarah Glover Curtis

Author of "The Trouble Woman,"
"A Maker of Men," etc.

THE employment office of the big machine shop had been filled with the usual Monday rush. All types and all kinds of humanity had poured through the doorways in a steady, relentless flood that buffeted the interviewers and crushed the file clerks into dispirited weariness. The air hung heavy with unsavory scents, and although the wind drove through the wide windows in gusts that showered the papers about, it seemed as if there were not enough strength and sweetness in all the world to revive the deadened atmosphere.

Tired after a long day's work, serene behind her big desk, Jane Calvin watched the last stragglers file out. She had been in the office for only six months, and the never-ending parade of people marching on the citadel of work was still a source of absorbing interest to her. The natural, inevitable egotism of each applicant, overwhelming every other consideration, the courteous attention of the interviewers, continually renewed, fascinated her. She herself employed the women for the plant, and as she sat in grateful idleness that winter afternoon, she wondered whether the men interviewers shared the joy she experienced in her work. Each woman who applied to her was a novel whose pages fluttered open at her touch.

Sometimes the type was blurred so that even her swift vision failed; sometimes it was black and heavy; and often whole chapters of uncut leaves dragged the book closed before her eyes. Each one was different from all the rest, and life was filled to overflowing with the happy zest of this new game.

Her hands, strong and slim, went to her bright brown hair with the quick, caressing gesture habitual to her, as she rose and went toward the outer office. At the manager's door, she paused to make room for a man who was coming out. He was big and lean and shabby; his heavy shoulders were sunk; dejection ruled every line of his dark face and every motion of his magnificent body. Although she saw disappointment a dozen times a day in varied phases, she could not yet witness it unmoved, and as the man brushed by her, she yielded to impulse and caught his arm.

"What's wrong?"

He looked down at her sullenly.

"Nothing."

Her eyes narrowed speculatively as they studied him. Then she smiled a grave, friendly little smile straight into the brooding face above her.

"Won't you come into my office?" she suggested casually. "It's right here."

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She turned from him, and after a momentary hesitation, he followed. For a full minute they studied each other across her desk—the big, slouching man and the erect, perfectly groomed young girl.

"Well?" he demanded at length.

She shook her head at him companionably.

"Tobogganing's always hard on the clothes, even in childhood, isn't it?" she confided. "Is it enough fun to—compensate?"

"Tobogganing?" he puzzled. The slow blood showed in his cheeks before he grinned. "Well, there's a certain exhilaration about it, you know, until you stop—and have to walk back!"

She nodded.

"I can understand that. But don't you think it advisable—when you're hunting a job, you know—to—to change from sport clothes to business dress?" she hinted delicately.

He glanced over his dingy length grimly.

"My trunks are—not available."

"I see." She pondered, her sleek head bent over her finger tips. "What was the last job you held in a plant?"

"General superintendent of the Canon Machine Works."

Her smoke-colored eyes flew wide.

"There's—there's—nothing like a high elevation to get momentum for the slide, is there?"

He did not answer, and complete silence pervaded the small room until the girl suddenly shot a single word at him.

"Incompetence?" she asked sharply.

And as sharply he responded, "No!"

"Good," she returned. "I don't much care what other thing it was—wine or women. It isn't my business, and I'd rather you wouldn't tell me. But I hate," she said, with her little air of making a confidence, "I hate incompetence. Broke, of course?"

He flashed a smile at her.

"Into smithereens."

She leaned forward toward him, her pale face, with its wonderful, vital eyes, raised.

"I'm going to stake you. Get clothes—the right kind—and come back here for a job. Division R is shaking in every breeze, and if you're as good as I somehow fancy you are, you may go big here."

His dark face was blanched as he looked at her; his lips flattened together; his big hands clenched.

"Why," he said huskily, "why—why do you think I know—the right kind of clothes?"

II.

She paused at the open door of the employment manager's office.

"I'm going out into the plant for an hour or two, Mr. Winter," she said.

"Looking for more trouble, Miss Calvin?" he demanded genially.

She laughed, holding up a hand for inspection.

"It's almost well again."

"Good." Winter turned to the wiry, nervous little man beside him. "Mr. Hamilton, this is the young lady I've been telling you about. Our new general manager, Miss Calvin. Miss Calvin," he continued with a broad smile, "makes occasional forays into the plant to work on machines. And several weeks ago, she made the mistake—a not uncommon one—of thinking that her machine knew her. Thought it considered her in the light of a personal friend, and was surprised and grieved when it bit her while she was trying to clean it with the power on!"

"Glad you have such an interest in your work." The general manager rose and caught her hand in a swift clasp. "I want to have a little talk with you."

For a long time they talked, Mr. Hamilton telling stories of his past experiences and outlining his present policies.

"The morale of any shop is extremely important," he finished, "but I differ from most people by holding not the women, but the men, strictly accountable. If there's a mix-up, the man goes every time. And I don't make any exceptions. The same rule applies to a laborer and the best man in the plant. To you, Winter"—he smiled—"or to Condon or Crane or McGregor. By the way, Winter, that man McGregor's a wonder. I congratulate you on your discrimination in placing him as you did. Did he just happen into the office, or did you have a line out for him?"

Winter shook his head.

"A friend of Miss Calvin's and introduced by her. She can tell you more about him than I can."

"I really know very little about him, Mr. Hamilton," she answered his questioning look, and rose. "But I'm so glad he's making good. Will you excuse me now, Mr. Winter?"

"I shall see you again, young lady."

The general manager spoke with a whimsical smile, and as she made her way out into the big shop, she wondered just what he had deduced from her evasion of the topic of Steven McGregor.

It was little she could tell, anyway, she reflected. When he had returned to the employment office after that first day, transformed as only clothes and courage can transform, he had been given a foreman's job in the worst room of Division R. He had made good there so conspicuously that he had now become the superintendent of the division and the cynosure of shop gossip.

Within a month of his employment, he had repaid her loan with a sturdy gratitude he had struggled manfully to express. She had pocketed the money in a matter-of-fact way, and he had spent the better part of two hours telling her about his work. She had listened attentively, asking questions freely, never making the mistake of pretending comprehension. But although

she knew that he enjoyed talking to her, and that he was grateful to her, he never again extended his visits beyond business necessity. She wondered why, and, impelled by a thoroughly feminine impulse, she decided to find out.

Division R lay in a remote part of the factory, and as she walked along, she thrilled, as always, to the deep-throated music of the machines. She passed through the aisles between them, dodged the busy operators, sidestepped the electric trucks, with the ease of much practice. Nods and friendly greetings met her, foremen stopped her, and women workers touched her arm to inquire into chances for better jobs or to ask her advice.

One woman stepped back from her machine to put an arm around the girl.

"I ain't seen you in an age!"

"Oh, hello, Mary! How long have you been working in Division R?"

"Just two weeks."

"Like it?"

"Grand. Mr. McGregor's the swellest boss! He comes around here," garrulously, "just as if he wasn't nothin' but an adjuster or straw boss, let alone a super! An' the other day——"

"How's the boy getting along, Mary?" the girl interrupted, diverting the talk, for what reason she could not have told.

The woman's face took on a high look, a blending of love and gratitude and pity.

"Fine! Oh, fine! Gawd, he's cute, Miss Calvin!" Her eyes filled with tears. "An' to think it's all owin' to you an' the money you loaned me that he's walkin' now!"

"Not a bit of it, Mary Connolly. It's all because you saved and scrimped to pay up the doctor's bill."

But the woman looked after her with the devotion of a spaniel.

"Gawd, if I can ever do somethin' for her!" she muttered, as she turned back to her machine.

Before she had time to analyze her motive in coming, or to reconsider her action, Jane Calvin found herself in the doorway of Steven McGregor's inner office.

By the leaping light in his eyes, she knew why he had not come to her office. But she had no knowledge of the color in her own cheeks or the brightness of the gaze that met his.

Smiling, but wordless, he placed a chair for her beside his desk. Silently she sank into it, and they surveyed each other. Her lips parted, but no words came; unavailingly he cleared his throat to essay speech. Discomfiture hovered close, then fled before the first ripple of the man's laughter.

"I'm most awfully glad to see you, Jane Calvin," he said. "How's the hand?"

"My hand?" She glanced from it to him in surprise. "How did you know I had hurt it?"

He smiled, and something that had hitherto been very cold in Jane Calvin's heart went all at once to warm and to expand.

"I was in the room when it happened," he said, and his voice seemed to have the same effect as his smile. "And when you fainted—and the stretcher was not forthcoming—I carried you up to the hospital. Let me see what kind of a job they did."

He picked up her hand and examined the ugly wound that ran the length of her finger into the pink palm. She felt a throbbing in the big hand, felt the rushing answer in her own hand before he laid it gently down upon her knee.

"It—it— You might have lost your hand," he said, not quite steadily. "You couldn't have been properly instructed. I— It's too big a risk. Do you intend going on machines any more?"

She nodded.

"Oh, yes. I'm going on this afternoon—as soon as I finish my call here.

And I imagine it really is time I started on my hunt for a good-natured foreman and an idle machine."

He sprang up before her as she rose.

"That's no way! Let me teach you!" His dark face was alight, his voice eager. "Lots of these foremen have no idea how to teach you. It's too risky! I— You—you never would have been hurt if I'd been there! Do let me teach you!"

"But—" Conscious that she was flushing and hesitant as a schoolgirl, Jane Calvin struggled for her business composure. "It—it hardly seems consistent, does it, to have a division superintendent teach me, when a job foreman would suffice?"

He laughed joyously, like a boy.

"A pretty poor fumble for an excuse, Jane Calvin!" he mocked. Then, almost sternly, "Unless you prefer some one else—unless I'm presuming—"

"Oh, no, no! I'd like it, but—"

Again he laughed.

"Great. Get into your working clothes, and I'll be waiting for you in the department."

He taught her many things that afternoon. Slim and straight in her overalls, she stood before the big profiler, attentive to his every word, docile to his every suggestion. He went over the nomenclature of the machine, showed her the oil holes, instructed her in its care; he corrected the way she stood and the way she threw her weight, made her roll up her sleeves more compactly and readjust her cap so that every glistening brown strand was covered.

The operators at the nearby machines showed a natural interest in the pair. Knowing smiles at "the boss'" absorption were interchanged; but there is nothing in life that can long attract a pieceworker's attention from his machine, and soon the two were forgotten in the mad, golden race.

A few minutes before five, the oper-

ators began making ready for departure, and as the gongs announced the hour, they all lined up swiftly, and in orderly fashion left the room.

Jane Calvin worked on steadily. But the machine was heavy, the cut a deep one, and the manipulation of the levers pulled side muscles never before used.

The physical strain, added to the mental effort of following implicitly the instructions she had received, began to tell upon her. Her hands were trembling and her breath was coming unevenly when McGregor turned off the power.

"Good enough!" he approved warmly. "Great work!"

She smiled up at him, pulling off her cap. Her cheeks were flushed, and little damp curls clung around her forehead.

"I don't wonder the girls hate to wear these caps. This is the best type I could find, but even this isn't a bit comfy. Thanks so much for the lesson. I can't shake hands," holding up a slim hand, wet and creased from the soda water, "but thanks just the same."

He refused to be dismissed, however.

"I'll wait for you to change."

The factory was still and deserted as they went through it on their way out. Silent shadows, black and thick, rolled up in their wake; red lights leered at them from exits and fire escapes; and all the vast, brooding quiet of the place was vibrant with suspense, as if tremblingly awaiting the moment to give birth to sound.

As they went out into the night, the cold air threw welcoming, invigorating arms about them; overhead the deep, majestic blue of the heaven showed almost black against the brilliance of its many jewels; and over the hillside at their feet swept a covering of snow, a miracle of unsullied beauty.

"When I get out into the air after a long day's work," the girl said softly,

"I feel as if I could never spend another day in the shop. But in the morning I come back just the same!"

But the man wasn't listening.

"Jane Calvin," he said brusquely.

The tone brought her eyes up to his in surprise.

"Yes?" she said.

"Will you——" he began abruptly, and stopped.

"Yes?" she repeated, and now her eyes were smiling, warm and violet hued, up through the darkness.

"Will you come to dinner with me—and then go skating? I wouldn't ask you if I shouldn't."

She waited while the grisly row of stark conventions rattled their bones in review before her; then deliberately, smiling, she made her decision.

"Skating?" she repeated, and her voice deepened to a queer little chuckle. "Skating? What fun!"

III.

A qualm, transmitted through the watching spirits of her careful ancestors, seized her as she faced him across the little table at the inn. She shouldn't have come. But—he certainly was attractive, she mused. She liked the way he moved; she liked the rugged beauty of his strong face—he looked rather like an Indian, a nice Indian; she liked the way he ordered the meal, finding out what she liked without bothering her with the "vegetable details," as she called them; she liked the line of his head and shoulders, the——

Guiltily she realized that he was smiling cognizance of her scrutiny. Brazenly her eyes lied that she had just that moment become aware of him as she returned his smile prettily.

"Not such a bad little inn for a city of this size, is it?" she queried blandly.

The ice that night was perfect. It lay as black and smooth as polished

marble, and across its breast it bore a ribbon of white gold, a challenge flung from the moon's queen to the earth's most young and fair. The wind, cool and freakish, blew gusts of snow, carnival gay, among the skaters, and the air was stirred with laughter and pleasant voices.

Jane Calvin was that exception among women, a strong and graceful skater. It was, she was wont to say, her one accomplishment, possible because her legs were mated and because there was an active communication between her brain and her feet. And that night, with her hand and arm linked fast in McGregor's, she moved as if skating were the perfect expression of her body and mind and soul. They indulged in a little foot-work, did a few of the tricks the vogue for skating had made popular, but for the most part they skated straight away down the length of the lake, their faces lifted to the wind, their bodies moving in perfect, rhythmic accord.

With a sudden swerve of his big arm, he swung her toward the shore.

"It's time to take this child home."

His voice was vibrant, and, glancing up, she caught the brilliance of his smile that changed to a laugh as she did so.

"You wonderful girl, Jane Calvin!" he said joyously: "You wonder!"

Child happy, they trudged home through the snow. McGregor, habitually taciturn, as if sombered by unhappy experiences, was exalted beyond himself. He had caught her arm and run with her up the steep bank from the lake, and she had laughed her funny little chuckle—and her arm still remained locked in his big one; an action without real significance, surely, but it added a warmer note to her entire graciousness. No matter what his faults, he was no weakling, and he knew definitely that night, as he walked through the snow beside Jane Calvin,

that his work would be crowned with great success—knew it as well as if life had already been accomplished and he was reviewing it—and that he would be a fitting mate for her.

The girl was not analyzing her emotions; she only knew that she was happy, and that she, who had always hated another's touch, liked, liked, liked the feel of the arm that half lifted her over the drifts.

The Calvin house, austere beautiful in its colonial whiteness, stood high and alone upon a hill. In a small room at the end of the wide central hall, a wood fire was burning, and, throwing aside their outdoor wraps, they piled logs on and pulled big chairs close.

Subconsciously, McGregor had been aware of the pervading beauty, but it was only when the girl rose and began rummaging in a huge cupboard that he looked about the room. It was comfort done in tobacco browns with flecking golds; it was beauty mellowed and perfected into one rich symphony.

He rose to look at a bronze that even his half knowledge recognized as priceless; a landscape in a modest frame with a flaming name drew his attention before his glance wandered to the first editions in the wide, low bookcases. Everything betrayed generations of cultured taste and great wealth.

In a way, he was not surprised. Everything about Jane Calvin betokened her breed—her body, her manner, her plain, well-cut clothes. And yet he had not been prepared for wealth. Her kind did not go into industrial life except through financial necessity.

"You're not being exactly useful"—her voice broke his thoughts—"and I'm too busy to see how ornamental you are. Do come and help."

She was connecting an electric toaster and filling a percolator.

"Open that little door at the end of the cupboard, and see what food there may be. What do you think of my

cupboard, anyway? I had it fitted up when I was in school, and it's usually fairly well stocked. I used to be chronically hungry, and to keep me out of the way in odd hours, and to decrease the 'turnover' in the kitchen department, we hit on this scheme. Pull up that table, please."

With a low table between their chairs, they feasted before the fire. The food was delectable—clear brown coffee and yellow cream, hot toast and jam and cheese, cold chicken and ham. They ate ravenously, and the food and the warmth gave their tired bodies that sensation of luxurious ease that only well-exercised muscles can know.

The girl talked fluently, with a certain droll humor that was unusual and amusing, but although McGregor listened appreciatively, she felt that the harmony of the early evening had fled, and that he was remote from her. And when silence crept upon them, she made no effort to stay it, but lay back in her big chair watching him from between half-closed eyes. The quiet of the night made the crackling of the wood and the sighing of the wind unnaturally loud, as the minutes dragged their way along.

At length, diverted from their study of the slow ruins building in rose and ash and black, McGregor's brooding eyes met hers.

"What's wrong?" she asked simply.

He moved restlessly.

"Your things," he said bluntly.

"Things? What things?"

"Your things." His expressive glance made each article prominent. "Your things," he repeated. "Your beautiful things."

"They are rather wonderful," she said evenly, after a pause. "But why do you speak of them so?"

"They're the accumulation of generations, aren't they?" he stated rather than asked. "Generations of people who studied, and traveled; people who

spent money like water for beauty; people of culture and breeding; people whose things were perfect, who—"

"Who put their things only a little lower than their God," she broke in, "who spent weeks studying the correct color scheme for a room, to whom a rug was a matter of prayer, and a jewel a barbaric ceremony of thought." She rose and stood leaning against the carved teakwood of the fireplace. "This wood was imported from India. I remember the day it came vividly. It arrived just two weeks after my mother and father did. It happened to be the day I was graduating from school, but they forgot that in the fun of unpacking their prize.

"They worshiped beauty," she continued, lowering her voice in that little confidence-making way she had, "but not in people. A wonderful bronze or a canvas or a bit of ivory appealed to their inmost souls—but an exquisite face or a magnificent body struck them as almost immodest." She laughed softly, in gentle tolerance. "They didn't like people. When I was a young girl and resented my isolation—so few people were congenial here—they tried very hard to teach me how to be sufficient unto myself. They stored my mind with learning so that my thoughts would be my companions; they taught me how to understand, how to appreciate the great art and music of the world. I satisfied them up to a certain point—but there never has been a time when I haven't preferred the sight of a busy street to the most perfect architecture, or wouldn't have turned from a symphony to the music of laughter. You see—I like people."

McGregor had risen also, and now, standing before the fire, he saw in its depths a swift pageant of what her life must have been. He was of the type whose ready sympathy and understanding control their imaginings, so that the pictures he made out in the

flare of the flames were wonderfully right.

"Is that why you went to work in the plant?" he asked at length.

"One of the reasons."

He visioned her starting in to work in the big office, he realized the disillusionments that must have accompanied the revelations that had come to her there, and his dark eyes were very tender as they rested upon her.

"But——" He paused, then laughed. "You must have a will of your own! How did you get your parents to consent to your going to work in a factory?"

"They were lost at sea," she said simply. "Perhaps—it may be—it was just the fitting time for them to go. My father's affairs had become terribly involved, and he was hurrying home to try to straighten them out. My grandfather had given me this house when he died. My father left—after everything had been settled up—just enough to keep the house going. But not enough to keep me going!" She laughed. "So I went to work at the plant. I've just had a raise," proudly, "and that's why you had cream in your coffee!"

But the man did not laugh with her.

"And you're working to 'keep yourself going' while this house eats up your income! Why in the world do you keep it?"

"Don't you see?" she asked him gravely. "I'm a Calvin—and these things are Calvin things. And although they are in a sense hateful to me because of the drag they are, I must keep them—or be faithless to a trust."

"But don't you see—you're literally chained to your things?"

"Yes—but in keeping the fetters intact, I've escaped to my people!"

"You like the work?"

"I love it!"

He held out his hand, smiling the smile that transfigured his dark face.

"You're even more wonderful than I thought, Jane Calvin."

Her hand in his, she accused him:

"And yet you were about to forego my friendship because of my things!"

"I shan't now." His hand tightened over hers, and the pressure of her own hand responded.

"I—I'm glad," she stammered.

And then, without warning, she was in his arms; her eyes, a deep purple now, were closing against the dark brilliance of his own, her lips submitting to the touch of his lips. For a dizzy second, she lay against his breast; then, releasing herself, she stepped back to the corner of the fireplace.

Flushed and anxious, McGregor watched her. Then he followed and, unresisted, took her slender, strong little hand in his. Holding it gently, he raised it to his lips and kissed the palm where the ugly wound ended.

"I—I shouldn't have done that," he said; adding, when she did not speak, "Are you angry?"

"No."

"Sorry?"

"I'm not sure."

"I was a fool to have done it! But, oh, Jane Calvin, my dear, if you knew what you've been to me from the very first minute I saw you! If you knew how I——"

But she stopped him with a hand laid swiftly on his arm.

"Please let's not talk about it, Steven." She smiled up at him gravely. "Don't worry about it. I'm not angry. And I'm not sorry—I think. Good night."

His hand covering hers that rested on his arm, he looked happily down upon her.

"You wonder!" he said fervently. "I'll call you up the first thing in the morning."

But she drew back.

"No, Steven, please!"

"But, dear, why not?"

"I—I want a little time before I see you again."

With her hands clasped behind her back, her fair face lifted to meet his steady gaze, she seemed all that was desirable in life. But he only said gently:

"I don't want to force you in the slightest—I want to follow your least wish. But why am I not even to telephone you?"

"I'd rather not. Please not! In a little while, in a few days, I'll call you."

"Very well. If you wish it that way. But you won't forget? You'll call me within a day or two?"

"Within a day or two."

Once more he raised her hand and placed his lips against her palm—once, twice, three times; then, taking up his coat and cap, he strode unseeing past the beauty of the Calvin things, out into the glory of the night.

IV.

Three days went by, and Jane Calvin had nearly arrived at the solution of her problem. She knew herself as all strong people do, and she weighed her traits against the man's traits as she knew them, and measured their chances for happiness. He was of a different caste, he thought along different lines, and his ideas and ideals were correspondingly at variance with her own. But he was strong and gentle, and he loved people. Her life with him would be out in the world with people, where little deeds and big deeds were accomplished. He did not wear much polish, but her own, she knew, was of too high a luster. Continued contact would remedy that for both of them. And, with a fast-pounding heart, she decided to take her chance.

She would call him up now, and should she invite him to the house for dinner—that would be fun—or have him take her to the inn as he had that

other night, and then go skating, and have supper at the house afterward? And then, before the fire——

As she sat musing at her desk, an unbusinesslike, but very lovely, smile upon her lips, the office boy thrust his shock of red hair in at the door.

"Hey! Mr. Winter wants to see you to once, Miss Calvin," he announced, adding confidentially, "and the big boss is with him."

The two men rose as she entered, an unusual courtesy which her ignorance took for granted.

"Mr. Hamilton has come over for a little information which I was unable to supply," the employment manager informed her. "I thought possibly you could help us out."

She turned expectantly toward the general manager, who seemed grave and perturbed.

"Did you hear of the trouble we've been having the last day or two in Division R?"

A flicker of worry flashed over her face before her mask of polite interest was fitted firmly into place.

"Trouble? No, I haven't, Mr. Hamilton."

"As you know, McGregor has made good there. Quite a remarkable record for so short a time. Now—several days ago, he got wind of a couple of scouts being in his department trying to organize the men. Naturally, he took steps to prevent it. This is an open shop—and it stays open. McGregor is pretty keen, and he trailed his men and caught them red-handed. One man stayed at his machine in a corner of the room while his mate went about the department and sent the men to him one at a time. The day McGregor caught him, though, there was a crowd around him, and he was haranguing them on certain company policies that had not met with his entire approval. McGregor fired him instantaneously. The man didn't know Mc-

Gregor and took his chance on more talk. He was a big chap—as big and husky as McGregor. But McGregor put him to sleep with one wallop. Wish I could have seen it!”

The general manager turned to Winter with a boyish grin.

“Not a dignified desire on the part of the G. M., is it, Miss Calvin?” he went on with a laugh. “Well, McGregor cleaned up the place. There were several more who thought they could earn their pay envelopes by knocking the company, but McGregor persuaded them that the healthiest procedure was to get jobs with people whose methods they considered fair and square.”

He paused, and the girl felt the sudden concentration of his mind upon her, together with the glance of his keen little gray eyes.

“How well do you know Steven McGregor, Miss Calvin?” he demanded bluntly.

“Quite well,” she returned blandly.

“What kind of a man is he?”

“Tall, powerfully built, with black eyes——”

“I’m perfectly familiar with his personal appearance, Miss Calvin. What I want is an insight into his character, his personality.”

“He seems to be a splendid type in every way.”

The general manager looked at her, amusement blending with his irritation.

“I don’t seem to be getting much help from you.”

“Why don’t you go to Mr. McGregor direct, Mr. Hamilton?”

“I don’t want to do that at this stage of the game.” He hesitated for a moment, then fairly shot his question at her: “What kind of a man is he with women?”

It was just as well that the wearing of masks had been an early part of Jane Calvin’s training. Even her voice was composed as she replied:

“Why, I’m afraid I don’t know exactly what you mean. Do you want to know how he impresses them?”

“No, I don’t.” He grinned at her. “Guess I’ll have to come across with the story if I want any help from you.”

But she only arched her dark brows, murmuring politely:

“Anything that I can do, I shall be glad to, of course.”

“Very well. Here is the whole thing. Yesterday a brother of Hastings—the man McGregor knocked out—came into my office to see me. He said that his brother was in the hospital—a matter I can’t bring myself to regret—but he made a very serious charge against McGregor.” He paused, and the girl waited for what seemed hours while he drew out a cigar and lighted it, frowning the while. “He said that McGregor was more intimate than he should be with his stenographer.”

There was a silence, and both men watched the girl sitting slenderly erect in her chair. Not a muscle moved, and her eyes were focused on her hands resting quietly on the edge of Mr. Winter’s desk.

“I don’t want to do anybody an injustice, but that sort of thing I will not tolerate in this plant as long as I am general manager. I’d fire the best man of the lot—and I think McGregor’s that—as quickly as I would a laborer. The evidence, as this man Hastings gives it, is conclusive, but——”

“He has a grudge against McGregor,” Mr. Winter interposed, “and that kind lie more easily than they tell the truth.”

“Hastings’ statement is, unfortunately, corroborated by others. But I thought that if Miss Calvin, out of her former knowledge of him, could give us something to work on——” He stopped.

Slowly, as if it were an effort, she rose.

"I don't believe it," she said, and her rich voice was low and strained.

"But if you'll tell us something about him before he came here?" the general manager insisted.

"I know nothing about him that would allow me to credit the story for a moment. Other than that"—she paused—"I'm afraid I can be of no assistance to you."

She turned to Winter inquiringly, and he answered her unspoken plea.

"Then that is all, thank you, Miss Calvin."

And when she had gone, closing the door carefully behind her, the two men looked at each other in troubled dismay.

"Good, Lord, Winter! Good Lord!" The general manager threw his cigar away vindictively. "I feel like a Hun torturer! I had no idea of that, had you?"

"Did you see her eyes?" Winter returned irrelevantly. "Good Lord!"

V.

Work, that God-given gift, went on in the employment office just the same; women seeking work came as usual to Jane Calvin's office, and as had been her custom from the start, the girl gave each one who came sympathy and understanding. But in those days she told herself that she understood, through the performance of deeds she could not feel, how deaf people felt speaking words they could not possibly hear. There was no change in her manner; her every duty was performed as punctiliously as ever; but her heart and mind were chaotic with the trouble that oppressed her.

Evenings, in the little room at the end of the hall, she fought the ground over and over. A woman without faith, she told herself fiercely, was a poor creature. But she knew so little of him—so little! His life before he had

known her was no concern of hers. She felt that there was little in it that he could not tell her, few things, if any, for which he had to blush. If this affair had been a ghost from the past, she would have gone to him unafraid, to have him lay it. But it was a thing of the present, a proof that he could not judge people.

She was a woman with comparatively little conceit, but she knew her own value. She knew that the fine grain of her skin went deep into her soul, knew that the strength and beauty of her body were only the outer phase of the strength and beauty of her mind. She knew that her love, once given, would be a wise man's priceless treasure. And she feared that she had thrown it away.

"It's as if," she thought miserably, her cheek against the cool comfort of a bronze's matchless beauty, "it's as if he turned from *you* to a plaster cast."

She had not called him up. A week went by, and dumbly she resisted the temptation of the automatic telephone at her hand. And then one day his face rose up before her, vivid in its dark and rugged beauty, and suddenly she knew—knew that he was fine and true. With a laugh, as of one awaking from a nightmare, she was up and out of her office. But her eagerness had carried her only a short distance when she heard the noise of roller skates behind her and the uplifted voice of the red-headed office boy.

"Hey, Miss Calvin! C'me on back!" She stopped impatiently.

"What for, Ted?"

"There's a woman wot wants to see you. You know—the one wot has the kid with the game leg."

"Tell her to come in to see me tomorrow," starting on. "I'm going in to the plant on very important business."

"But—hey—wait! She told Mr. Winter that she had to see you right away—without a minute's delay! An'

the boss said, when I found you, to tell you to come!"

"All right, Ted. I'll come, then."

The woman rose in agitation as she appeared.

"My, I'm that relieved to see you! D'you mind if I close the door?"

She acted on her words without waiting for the girl's reply, then came close.

"Y'know I'd do 'most anythin' for you, Miss Calvin—after all you done for me, don't you?"

"Yes, Mary. I know you would."

The woman put her hands on the girl's shoulders and looked squarely into her face.

"But will you let me talk straight talk to you, the same as if I was your sister?"

"Yes."

"Then—answer me true. I seen Steven McGregor teachin' you that night. Are you sweet on him?"

The girl's eyes contracted. For a moment she shrank equally from the crudity of the woman and of her phrase. But she had not studied her people for nothing, and after a moment she answered steadily, truthfully:

"Yes."

"Then I'm goin' against my own flesh an' blood to tell you. Sit down."

They sat down facing each other, the woman whose trials and troubles had robbed her of the last vestige of youth, and the girl, fresh and young.

"You know what they're sayin' of him?"

"Yes."

"D'you believe it?"

"No." The girl's lips quivered into a firm red line. "Not now. At first I didn't know—I didn't know. And then, all at once, I did. I was on my way to tell him when you came."

"Good. You're nobody's fool, Miss Calvin. But he'll be fired for all that—unless—"

She hesitated, and the girl suddenly put a compelling hand upon her knee.

"We've got to save him, Mary."

"Sure." The woman heaved a sigh.

"That's what I came down here for—but— Well, my name used to be Hastings, Miss Calvin, afore I married Connolly."

"Hastings?" For a second she groped in her memory. Then, "That's the name of the man McGregor knocked out!" she cried.

"Sure. Hastings, the labor organizer, is my brother."

"Yes, Mary, yes!"

The woman smiled tolerantly into her eager face.

"It's a plant, dearie, to get him."

"They put that girl—real pretty she is—up in his office to get him. He didn't pay no attention to her, though, any more'n if she'd been a typewriter or a chair. But you know how darned moral the new G. M. is?"

A smile caught the girl's red lips upward.

"I know."

"Well—they talked, Hastings and the girl and the men. And the G. M. don't like talk. Now this is the plan that I heard Hastings an' the others dopin' out last night at my house. This afternoon the G. M. an' Winter are goin' up to McGregor's office for a conference at three-thirty. An' the crowd of 'em have it all framed that when they come, they'll see somethin'. There'll be a boy posted outside an' just as soon as the G. M. an' Winter come in sight, he'll tip off the girl. An' when they get into the office, the picture'll be waitin'."

"Three-thirty! It's a quarter past now." The girl rose swiftly. "Are you coming, Mary?"

"My Gawd, no! Keep me out o' this, Miss Calvin!" The woman seized her arm in a grip of terror. "If my brother knowed I squealed— Keep me out o' this! Promise, Miss Calvin!"

"I promise. And, oh, Mary, thank you!" She took the woman's hands swiftly. "Thank you!"

The way to McGregor's office seemed endlessly, hopelessly long. But as she ran up iron stairways and sped down long corridors, her mind was busy on her course of action. She would go into the outer office and talk with West, the labor man of the division, and watch events. If the door was closed to the inner office so that she could not see, she would go directly in to McGregor.

But the door to the inner office was wide, and as she caught sight of him for the first time since that night, her breath came unevenly, brokenly. He was at his desk, dictating, and the girl, from beside West's desk, could see the pretty young stenographer. She really was lovely to look upon—brown hair and brown eyes and soft, dark skin. She seemed to be nervous, and the girl in the outer office could see her glancing anxiously from her notes to the watch strapped to her wrist.

A messenger boy with mail came in noisily and, disregarding West's call, went into McGregor's office. He gave the letters to the stenographer, and as McGregor looked up, impatient at the interruption, he saw Jane Calvin. He sat motionless, staring full at her, and as she returned his look, half smiling, the door from the corridor opened. As if it had been a signal, the stenographer leaned closer to McGregor and, with a single, quick movement, threw her arms around his neck and buried her face against his shoulder. The moment that he sat there, paralyzed with amazement, was sufficient to allow Hamilton, with Winter behind him, to gain the inner office.

His face black with anger, McGregor freed himself, but before he could speak, or Hamilton, or Winter, Jane Calvin had closed the door and had taken her stand beside McGregor. She smiled a loyal little smile straight into his dark eyes, while the other girl drew back, her lips snarled back over white teeth.

For a moment there was a breathless silence, while everybody watched Jane Calvin, Hamilton and Winter pityingly, McGregor as one who sees heavenly vistas opening out, and the girl like a panther at bay.

"It's a trap, Mr. Hamilton," Jane Calvin said simply, "a trap. I just found it out. This young lady is in the employ of Hastings, the labor organizer that McGregor dismissed. The gossip that has been circulating about the plant is nothing but propaganda supplied by the unions. If she will wait outside, I will give you more details."

But the girl whirled on her spitefully.

"You lie!" she said fiercely. "Steven McGregor's my lover and has been for years, and what's——"

Confronted suddenly by Steven McGregor's stern face, she paused.

"What 'years' exactly, madam?" he demanded, with ironic courtesy.

"Last year," she declared steadfastly, "and the year before and——"

"Thank you."

He stepped back to his desk and, unlocking a small compartment, handed a package of papers to the manager.

"My commission and discharge from the British army." He turned to Jane Calvin, and before them all he took her hand. "When you saw me that first day in the employment office, I *had* been hitting the toboggan. I was discharged from the army suffering from shell shock, and after I reached the States, I was ill for weeks. My funds seemed to vanish all at once. And I simply could not connect up with a job. Everybody was letting men go instead of taking them on, and my training and record went for nothing. And then I started sliding!" Tall and straight, a splendid specimen, he stood beside her, and the older men watched him, smiling and a little envious. "If it hadn't been for you," he said, "if it hadn't been for you——"

He had forgotten the others in the mystery of the changing shades in the eyes that were lifted to him.

"Well, exactly what did *she* do?" Hamilton interrupted curiously. "And you needn't kick my ankle to shut me up, Winter," grinning shamelessly at that gentleman. "I know I shouldn't ask, but, dog-gone it, I want to *know*!"

McGregor laughed, a rich paean of triumph.

"She staked me! I came into the employment office discouraged and shabby and down and out. And she asked me into her office and ordered me to get some clothes and handed over the money, which I took!"

"Gad!" Hamilton rubbed his hands together in delight. "How long had she known you?"

Again McGregor laughed.

"She'd never seen me before!"

"Gad! By gad!"

Hamilton strode up and down the office, pausing to slap Winter violently on the back.

"What do you think of that, Winter? Never'd seen him before! There's a girl! What d'you think of it, Winter?"

But before Winter could reply, Hamilton became suddenly aware of the presence of the stenographer, standing sullenly contemptuous of his enthusiasm.

"Humph!" he said. "I'd forgotten you." He opened the door, bowing. "I somehow think, young lady, that our little party would be more complete without you."

She passed out slowly, with fiery cheeks and angry, baffled eyes.

"That's the end of *her*, I hope. But, by gad, Miss Calvin, you haven't told us how you found out about this unspeakable business."

Briefly, with due regard to her promise to Mary Connolly, she told them what she had learned. It was not easy to talk, with the three men hanging on her every word and McGregor's big hand refusing every hint to release its captive.

When she had finished, Hamilton jerked up a chair and sat down.

"Now let's see how we can get this union gang." Irritation and disgust swept over him. "They nearly got me—now it's my move. And I want you all to help. Sit down. Sit down."

But Winter, with twinkling eyes, put a hand on his shoulder.

"Don't forget you have a conference in your office at four o'clock, sir," he said.

"Why, no, I haven't." Hamilton looked up in surprise. Then, meeting Winter's meaning look, he stared for a moment and scrambled, grinning, to his feet. "Why, yes, I have! My Lord, Winter," consulting his watch, "we'll be late! Why didn't you remind me before? What good are you? What d'you suppose I take you round with me for? Come to my office to-morrow morning, McGregor," shaking hands violently, "and bring Miss Calvin with you."

They went out, slamming the door behind them. And the man and the girl turned slowly toward each other.

"Was that why you didn't telephone?" the man asked.

The girl nodded.

"But I had started on my way to you before I had the proof."

Silently he drew her to him, but she placed a resisting hand against his breast.

"Not now. Not here." She lifted a radiant face to him. "Let's go home to the little room—beside the fire."





When Lilacs Bloomed

By R. B. Tuthill

MARGOT was not waiting at the crossroads, as she had promised, but Anne kept on. An unnecessary thing to do, she reflected, since it was solely on Margot's account that she was out at all. An exhilaration, a sense of freedom, a feeling that she could be herself again, wholly and unstintingly, was upon her.

And why? The answer was glaringly simple. Holworth had gone over to the American side of the river for the day. He'd gone without her—protesting, it is true, but still he'd gone. And the train that he must take in order to sit out that publishers' dinner—publishers of textbooks they were, not of romances, publishers of mathematical, provable, incontrovertible facts, the sort of things to which Holworth was devoted—didn't come across the International Bridge until one-thirty. It would be nearly morning when he got back to the cottage.

It was the first time Anne had had a whole day to herself since her marriage. Three years now, and never twenty-four hours spent away from Holworth! If your husband occupies a university chair, such things can be. All your springs and winters and autumns and summers can be spent together. You need never be separated. Anne had thought it a beautiful arrangement at first. But somehow now it had begun to pall. Not on Holworth, apparently. That was what made it complicated. If he had had his way, she would have been killing time now somewhere over in that

smoke-obscured city across the river, as she had done so often before, while he transacted his business. She would have spent the evening reading in some plush-upholstered, electric-lighted hotel room until he came to take her to the train. And she would have gone home with him, striving to hide her boredom, while he talked of the dinner. It had all happened again and again, only the name of the city changing. But this time her promise to help that wild Margot out with her adventure had served as an excuse.

Not that Anne had told her husband it was to be an adventure. She had simply said that she had promised to take Margot to spend the day with a friend and couldn't disappoint her. Holworth had naturally concluded that the friend must be feminine. He could not fancy his Anne, whose nature he regarded as an open book, countenancing day-spendings with an unknown masculine adjunct. But now, though Margot unaccountably had not materialized, Anne still went on. And somehow, quite unexplainedly, she found herself hitting up her engine until the speedometer pointed to thirty-five instead of its accustomed thirty.

Always before, when she had gone out in the car alone, it had been with some definite object in view, an object in which Holworth was inevitably centralized. She was always on her way to meet Holworth, or coming back from taking Holworth somewhere, or out shopping for Holworth—he deferred to her taste in neckties, socks,

and shirts—or marketing for Holworth's house. But this, this that she was doing now alone—this that Holworth had no part in—this was a joy ride!

With a wake of sun-brightened dust whirling behind her, she sped along in the low gray roadster, and her exhilaration at being free from him for a whole day grew until it included her failure to meet Margot. She had waited at the crossroads a whole half hour to make sure that Margot was not keeping tryst, and now she had the satisfied conscience of one who has earned the right to pleasure. With Margot's defection, the adventure had become Anne's alone, though of course it would not really be an adventure without the mysterious Jacques that Margot must meet so secretly. Margot must have had word that he was not coming. Anne was rather sorry. Margot's account of Jacques had been of the kind to arouse one's disapproval, perhaps, but certainly one's interest. But the keen purity of the Canadian air in her nostrils, the rushing of the wind in her ears, the vibrant whistle of the meadow larks, all held for Anne the same message that morning—freedom to quest at will, to take whatever chances of gladness there might be in the eternal game.

Anne was not sure how far her acquaintance with Margot and Margot's somewhat startling views on men and marriage was responsible for her mood. Anne had expected marriage to be a thrilling, vivid experience. She had brought to it all her own vividness and capacity for emotion. But she had come to feel that she had been altogether wrong. Marriage, so far as she knew it, was neither thrilling nor vivid. It was compelling and neutral tinted. Moreover, she was convinced that Holworth connected everything thrilling and vivid between man and woman with immorality. He was

limbed and featured like a Greek god, but he had the brain of a Puritan pedant. People—and Anne reflected, that they were all people of his own irreproachable type—said that he was devoted to Anne and pointed to their marriage as perfect.

Until lately, Anne had found herself subscribing to their opinion. If devotion meant never being separated for more than a few hours at a time, people were certainly right. Holworth's eternal presence acted upon her like a drug. It hypnotized her and made her languid and dormant. Sometimes she thought that this state of languor and dormancy was more satisfactory than delight. She saw herself as a swimmer who floats lazily on a glassy sea. There was delight in cutting through buffeting waves, but one was spent at the end. The kind of life she lived with Holworth was unemotional and assured. Anne had come to the conclusion that romance had little to do with matrimony.

Their third year of marriage was also Holworth's Sabbatical year. Sabbatical years are supposed to be spent in a conscientious broadening of the mind by travel and research. So they had made the round of the universities, and Holworth had foregathered with recondite men, and Anne had been invited out to innumerable teas by their intellectual wives, blandly content in the unassailable position of representing the brains and culture of America. Anne had grown a little weary of hearing Holworth extolled for his learning and virtue. All these women were floating as lazily as she. Yet she felt a difference between herself and them. They would have drowned in the big, keen waves of the ocean, but Anne knew that she could swim.

After eight months of the aforesaid travel and research, Holworth signified his desire to find some quiet spot in the country where he could occupy

himself with the first draft of his forthcoming textbook, and the end of his Sabbatical year found them in a little village on the Canadian side of Lake Erie. "No trolleys, no phones, nothing doing, ever," had been the chance recommendation that had appealed to Holworth.

From the day of their arrival in the straggling little unkempt village, with its green rush of river, its waving grasses, its weed-invaded gutters, and its sweet-clover thickets, Anne had felt something in her leaping in a glad response to the note of lawlessness. With a righteous disapproval, Holworth stood aloof and viewed its chronic sinfulness, indulged in as a habit without rejoicing—Holworth's righteousness and its transgression seemed pitched in the same key—but Anne let herself go in a mesmerism, a bewitchment. It was as if all she saw were a prophecy. Everything held for her the same message: "Here something will happen to you. You cannot escape. Its spell is upon you now!" And she was untroubled when Holworth had proposed seeking a less reprehensible spot, where the inhabitants gambled less openly, smuggled less chronically, and loved less lightly. She knew they would not go until it had happened to her—that unescapable thing that must come into her life. She waited for it, not because she wished it to come—on the contrary, she had an idea that it would bring her suffering—but because it was useless to try to avoid it.

Meanwhile, she drank of the beauty of the country as a drunkard, after a forced abstinence, intoxicates himself with wine. The rush of blue and sun-shot green and diamond fringes of spray that was the river, the faint, fresh smell of the weedy lake, the wild flowers that flourished with a sturdy beauty in the austerity of the spring, the pure, passionless note of the meadow larks, even the dinkey engine that rattled by

on its rickety roadbed, with its long tail of dilapidated coaches, to the picnic grove up the lake—all were inseparably blended in the witchery that was upon her. And Holworth read the papers, and corrected innumerable notes, and botanized with a textbook and a microscope, and was immensely interested in fossil fern leaves discovered in the limestone ledges of the river bank, and noted, among the other phenomena, Anne's unusual radiance with a proprietary approval.

"You are quite as you were when I first met you, my dear. Now I think of it, you've changed somewhat since our marriage—lost something of that brightness and daring that attracted me to you so irresistibly when I first saw you. It went so gradually that I hardly realized it, but now that you have it back again, I see what made the difference. The quieter dignity that has come to you during these three happy years is very lovely, very fitting in one who has left maidenhood behind and taken up the responsibilities of a wife. It sits very sweetly upon you, with your girlish face and figure. On the whole, I prefer it to that first manner of yours, especially when I compare it with the unconventional boldness of that Margot Sartoris. Still, I am not sorry to see you regain your light-hearted bloom for a while. This is vacation season, you know, my dear."

And Anne listened and smiled a little at herself for being unable to feel any resentment that Holworth should never for a moment think himself responsible for the dimming of the shining, buoyant quality that even he had recognized before life with him had put her to sleep. For why should she mind what Holworth said or thought? In the foreshadowed adventure that was to intervene, Holworth's sterling qualities would play no part. However she might seek in loyalty to drag him in, Fate would have none of him.

As for Margot Sartoris, whose boldness and unconventionality Holworth set over against Anne's wifely docility, unlike all of Anne's other women acquaintances, she found Holworth's undoubted learning and virtue admirable only as they afforded her ground for amusement. Moreover, she had dared to express it to Anne.

"Holworth!" she had mused. "What a mouthful! Do you always calls him that—all of it?"

"There doesn't seem to be any way to abbreviate it," Anne had replied apologetically.

Margot's slanting eyes had grown wicked.

"No, your husband isn't a type that lends itself gracefully to abbreviation! Still, I don't know. You might call him 'Holly'!"

Whereupon, Anne's eyes, stormy-blue like troubled seas, had grown wicked to match Margot's, albeit her manner was becomingly demure.

"I think my husband would consider 'Holly' *much* too cheerful! 'Worthy,' perhaps, might appeal to him, though!"

They had looked at each other and laughed.

Encouraged in her wickedness, Margot had gone on.

"Professor Brooke is so *young*! At least not that," she had corrected herself. "Maybe I mean so *old*. Youth has enthusiasms. I think, perhaps, I mean that he's callow."

Anne had started. "Callow" applied to Holworth, he of the mighty, all-seeing, encyclopedic intellect! Yet, somehow, Margot hit it!

"'Callow' means inexperienced, doesn't it?" Margot had asked. "Your husband will always be inexperienced, because he doesn't want anything but the safe experiences. 'Adventures! Away with them! They only lead to trouble'—that's about what he says to himself, I imagine. Now *you*"—suddenly she had flashed a torch of illu-

mination before Anne's dazzled eyes—"oh, you are a lovely adventure yourself, waiting for some one!"

There had been an amused bitterness in Anne's reply:

"Holworth hasn't found me that, I assure you. To him, I've been exactly what you say he wants—a perfectly safe experience."

At which Margot had cried out in protest:

"Safe, oh, no! Perilous in the extreme for some man. Not your husband, though. He's wonderful to look at. His looks were what you fell for, I suppose. A sculptor would rave over him. He's a kind of male Galatea, you know. Only, I doubt if there's a female Pygmalion on earth who could bring him to life! *He'll* always go on thinking that you're a strait and narrow path, when you're really a broad way that leadeth to destruction!"

And as Margot had spoken, Anne had seemed to be getting acquainted with herself again because some one had recognized her.

It was not suddenness, however, that Margot had brought to the unveiling of Anne. Her first visit to the little stone cottage under the clumps of lilacs had been one of quiet neighborliness.

"I live around the corner there with Aunt Angelique," she had explained. "Aunt Angelique is very lame and pays no visits now. But she fears you will think us like the rest of this delightfully disreputable little hamlet if I don't come up to assure you that we are quite all right in every respect and worthy to be your neighbors. At least, I *know* Aunt Angelique is, and she *thinks* I am. And our name is Sartoris, and our forebears came from France among the first, and we are the last of our name." Under the lightness, there had been a flash of pride—and a touch of pathos.

From the first, the girl had fascinated Anne. There was that in her

lithe, strong figure and swinging walk that emphasized a wildness unsubdued and unsubduable. Her slanting eyes, darkened past their intrinsic gold-flecked brown by her immensely thick lashes, hinted at subtle secrets. But they looked at you with a mocking honesty that seemed to say you were welcome to know them all if you could find them out—that their owner's secrets were of glorious, joyous things, not of murky shame. The dusky rose that burned the broad modeling of her cheeks underneath her eyes gave the kind of brilliant fascination that rouge sometimes lends, and her mouth, with its curved corners and its smiling lift in the bowed center above the small, shining teeth, seemed to Anne the most seductive thing her eyes had ever beheld. Oh, yes, this girl who stood leaning over their gate pickets in the early twilight had the qualities of this matchless country—its life, its wildness, its ensnaring mystery! One did not analyze it—one felt it in every fiber. At least Anne did. Holworth was as polite and correct and Greek-god-like as ever. Only, the Greek gods knew mortal love and weakness, and Holworth was an intellect, so Margot's appeal was not to him.

It was not until Margot had gone, and Anne had had time to think her over, that she recognized that this arresting Canadian girl was older than herself. Vigorous, life-radiating, joy-inspiring she was to an extent that caused one to ignore, while looking at her, the slight hollowing in the cheek, the faint lines around the secret-holding eyes, the settled firmness of the seductive mouth. Margot Sartoris was in the thirties, Anne decided. There was nothing crude or unfinished in her joyous vigor. Under it lay the perfect poise that comes only from knowledge.

Holworth dismissed Margot's initial visit with the remark: "She has good manners, but there's something queer

about her. I don't know that I care to have you cultivate her acquaintance."

And just as Anne had kept to herself the strange possession the country had taken of her, so she kept to herself the strange attraction that compelled her toward the girl who was part of it.

As for Margot, she seldom came to the cottage except when Holworth departed on his botanizing and fossilizing expeditions. Then she would swing over the rocks in her rough khaki dress with its V-necked blouse, open the little wicket of the garden that encroached even on the gray rock ledges, settle herself on the low veranda step under the lilac bushes, draw a cigarette case from the pocket of her blouse, and smoke with the same appearance of deep-seated, impregnable joy that characterized her every action.

"I wouldn't do this if your perfectly good husband were here," was as near as she had come to asking permission. And Anne, unused to women who smoked, had been flattered by being taken for granted as one who was thoroughly sophisticated.

"It isn't that I'd mind a bit shocking him," Margot had explained. "I'd rather like it," she had sparkled. "Only, I love my cigarette too much to take it into uncongenial society."

It was the cigarettes and the platinum case encrusted with moonstones that held them that had led to Jacques. Anne had exclaimed at the beauty of the extravagant bauble, and Margot, with a swift gesture had raised it to her lips.

"Moonstones bring me luck," she had said. "This is the only thing I have ever let Jacques give me. You see, knowing that I have his love, I want nothing but just luck that I may keep it."

She had said it slowly, with a still intensity that touched some deep spring in Anne and sent it gushing.

"You don't need the moonstones! If

a man loved you, he could never stop, even if he willed it!"

Margot had looked out across the foaming river and a shadow had seemed to creep across her joy.

"Jacques says that the only thing stronger than will is fate. That's the difference in our loves. He *wills* to love me forever—it is my fate to love him. That's why I need my moonstones for luck. I was mad about him from the first. With him, it was more gradual. He felt in me what I could not help feeling for him. That was what drew him. But, after that, it was equal! Ah," and the shadow that had been upon her had lifted, and her eyes had flashed their secrets of joy into Anne's, "I should love to show you Jacques! Then you'd understand!"

They had been silent after that, and it had seemed to Anne that she had felt the heartbeats of this lawlessly beautiful country throbbing through her. It was in the rush of the river, the gurgling of the current among the stones, the bending of the wind-buffed willows. It was in Margot's love for this unknown man called Jacques—this man who gave because he willed it, who received because it was fate. And in the throbbing there was no room for the Holworths of earth.

But because the thought of Holworth brought with it the thought of marriage, the ties conventional and accepted, Anne had broken in upon Margot's silence with a question:

"If you love him like that and he loves you, why don't you marry him?"

Margot's answer had been simplicity itself. It was as if she stated a fact, irrefutable, but concerning her little: "He's married already."

Anne's emotions had been mixed. In Holworth's set, of course, these things weren't done. Marriage fixed things for you, labeled you "Hands off," clipped the wings of Love so that he

might not rove. Anne had fallen into the habit of blaming herself for not being able to accept the creed. And now here was Margot—Margot of the joyous secrets—calmly brushing aside all the gray righteousness of Holworth's breed as if it were a mere incident. Anne, a three-year-married woman, was learning things from Margot. The mysteries were being interpreted. Like one who is on the trail of some shy, wild wood creature with which one longs to make friends, Anne had sat silent, holding her breath, and listened.

"That is why we cannot meet often. He has his reputation to consider, and, of course"—the curves of Margot's lips had been scornful—"I have mine. Only," and a reckless abandon had flamed over her, "if it were just a question of me, it could go hang!"

"Ah, that is it—that is it!" Anne's heart was saying. "That is what makes it possible to know great joy—the power to take it and let everything else go hang!" This was what Margot had.

"I've never let him know how much I care. Of course, I've risked a great deal, and he understands that I'm not the kind to do that lightly," and now Margot's head had been lifted like a queen's whose condescension is for one alone. "What he doesn't know is that there's nothing on earth I wouldn't risk or give or go without rather than give him up!"

This had been the beginning of those talks about Jacques. Margot had a way of suddenly bringing him into her conversation, sometimes with a matter-of-fact statement:

"You must have heard of Fricot & Fortier, the Quebec bankers." Jacques' wife was the daughter of the senior member. She's an only child. So is Jacques. Their fathers wanted to be sure that everything they had built up together would never be divided. This was the only way they could be sure.

They had planned it always. That's the French arrangement. Jacques has two children, a girl and a boy. It was after the boy was born that I came to know Jacques."

Anne seldom questioned. She listened to these bits of revelation in a silence that was curiously tense and hungry. It was as if she hung upon Margot's words for tidings of some one whom she had believed lost forever, but who, after all, might be living.

"Can you understand that it is not a tragedy for his wife—only for Jacques—their marriage? She adores his children. So does he. I have another aunt who lives in Quebec. I stop with her sometimes. His wife and my-aunt exchange visits, and I've seen Jacques in his own home. Not often—it's too great a strain for both of us—but he is at his best there. His manner to his wife is perfection. He would honor any woman who had given him such children. She suspects nothing, and even if she did, it would make no difference. She would still hold Jacques. She is orthodox. For her there is no such thing as divorce. She believes what the church teaches her."

"And what do you and he believe in?" Anne had asked here.

Swift as truth had come Margot's answer:

"Jacques? Oh, he believes in nothing. And I believe in Jacques!"

But though she talked freely, without apparent reservation, Anne had to admit that, beyond the fact that Margot loved him, she knew little. Margot's revelation stopped there. She might let you guess at the reckless worst, but she never let it become an inartistic surety. Almost at the point of confession, she suddenly smiled and grew noncommittal and puffed her beloved cigarette.

Once she held the moonstone-encrusted case up to Anne, exclaiming:

"I believe, if I were fair like you, I should have no need of moonstones for luck! Jacques says that love is electricity—it leaps between opposite poles. I have every quality that he cares for most, he says, but we can't get away from it, we are both dark. He says the love of the South for the South can never have the intensity of the love of the South for the North. And you—I always feel that once you sailed in a Viking ship and looked upon cold, sun-bright seas! I've told Jacques about you in letters."

"And I always think of you as lying lazy and mysterious in the sunshine beside a stone image of some Eastern god—Buddha, perhaps—and you are dressed in flame color, and you're playing with a chain of marigolds!"

Margot's joyous eyes were shining behind their lashes.

"Marigolds! How odd! I've never told you how I love them, have I? And everything that is peppery and pungent—marigolds and pine needles and nasturtiums and mint, and, above all, pennyroyal! Jacques calls it my plant. The first time he and I ever walked together in the woods, we came upon it growing by a little stream. I crushed it in my hands and held them up to his face, and he kissed them. That was the first time he had touched me. We went mad that day!" She stopped abruptly as she always did when about to confide too much, and puffed her cigarette. "Now, you, I suppose, are like Jacques. You love the smell of lilacs."

Anne had looked up at the tall bushes that had begun to show dark-tinted clusters of tightly rolled buds among the glistening, heart-shaped leaves.

"Yes, I love it. I've longed for a lilac tree all my life, and now I'm going to revel in them. They'll soon be out. Holworth doesn't share my joy. He detests their fragrance."

"Ah, and so do I! They put me under a kind of spell. They do something to me that I hate! They make me faint and ill and miserable. The smell of them in Aunt Angelique's garden keeps me awake at night. They are like a poison!"

As if ashamed of her intensity, Margot had got up from the steps with a laugh.

"I believe I have more in common with your perfectly good husband than you have, after all. Now, don't protest that you and he are all in all to each other, as Aunt Angelique says you are. You may have been a Viking maiden and sailed among fields of ice, but he is *made* of it!"

As Anne let her engine out and sped into the June morning, she was thinking of these things.

It was the heyday of the lilac season. They had reached the zenith of their beauty. Each separate blossom spread its pale lavender quartet of petals full bloom around the central yellow, and they deepened at the points of their clusters into half-opened buds darkened with deep pink stains. They were gay. They were sturdy. They seemed possessed of a vitality that would never fade. They were like purple clouds of perfume against the blue sky. They tossed it down in the daytime when the wind shook them. In the quiet of the night, they exhaled it deep into the star-lighted dampness of the river air as if they would drug the world into a deep, delicious sleep. A hundred times a day, while Holworth sniffed disparagingly and begged at least that she bring none of "those things" into the house, Anne caught her breath with a pleasure that ran through her like a tingling, electrical current and left her trembling.

The fact that Holworth disliked the heady fragrance that intoxicated her somehow added to her joy in it. Holworth disapproved of Margot, who at-

tracted her as no other woman ever had. Holworth saw nothing in this passionate, vital country that had bewitched her, except the opportunity to write textbooks and fossilize. Well, all the better. It gave her the right to withdraw into some inner sanctuary from which he was locked by his own limitations. As for Margot, the rougelike dash of dusky red under her dark eyes was less brilliant, and Anne saw her infrequently.

"I can't stand your lilacs," was her explanation. "The day Jacques comes, you are to take us back into the country, far away from the land of gardens. I want every scent that is strong and wholesome and medicinal after all this cloying sweetness. He'll get off at the Port Charles station and walk across to the Garrison Road. I'll join you at the crossroads, and we'll meet him. You see, it's necessary, for his sake, that Aunt Angelique shouldn't know. She might write to my aunt in Quebec, and the thing might somehow be remarked. Of course, this thing hasn't been going on for four years now between Jacques and me without a few people becoming interested. That matters very little. Only there's one thing we have no right to do—to hurt his wife by allowing her to suspect anything. If she's contented with what he gives her, she must go on thinking that is all he has to give. The Jacques who loves me is not the father of her children, the successful business man, the respected banker. The Jacques who loves me has no ties. He's only a free vagabond adventuring gloriously—and that's the Jacques I love! If I don't meet you at the crossroads, he isn't coming. I shall know."

"Will he send you a message?" Anne had asked.

Margot had smiled.

"Maybe. But, anyway, I shall know."

Well, message or not, Margot had not been at the crossroads. Jacques

was not coming. But something was. Anne felt it in every exulting fiber. Was it that inevitable thing for which she waited—that thing compounded of joy and suffering from which there was no escape? She laughed for pure excitement. Well, let it come now in the wantonness of this sparkling country that had bewitched her, while the intoxication of the lilacs was upon her!

The crushed limestone on the road before her shone like silver. Agitated farm dogs dashed out from between gateposts and hurled themselves at the wheels of the car, barking deafeningly. The stretches of flat meadow country, broken by patches of woodland, unrolled itself endlessly toward the blue Canadian sky, and where the short cut from Port Charles met the Garrison Road, a man was standing—a slender, clean-hipped man with dark, uncovered hair, a man with his hands full of lilacs, a man dressed for walking, in thick boots and tan puttees, a man of a type common enough in the country in vacation time, a man of cities, vagabonding for a season on the open road.

There was apparently no reason why Anne should stop her car; less, why he should step out into the roadway and place his hand upon the shining wheel; or why, these things being accomplished, they should remain silent, looking at each other as souls might who, having met in eternity, remember the joys they have shared on earth.

"I know you are Anne!"

"And you are Jacques!"

"I should love to show you Jacques! Then you'd understand!" Margot's words echoed through Anne's consciousness like bells in a dream. Well, she had seen him, and Margot was right. She understood—understood the charm of him, the mingled delicacy and strength, the gayety and ardor and tragedy, the recklessness and the shrewdness. He was the dreamer whipped awake by realities, the gypsy

who must live up to the duties of the man of substance, the careless poet who must pin himself down to painstaking prose, the fatalist inconsistently fighting against destiny with the weapon of his will—a man, not unfaithful by nature, tricked by circumstance into fickleness. He was Jacques!

And he? He saw a woman of that dazzling fairness which is Norse, whose thick, uncovered coils of hair were like pale northern sunshine, whose eyes were dark as wind-swept Arctic seas under the storm clouds of her lashes, whose half-smiling mouth seemed to him to hold all the passion of the fierce, bright Viking summers when day has no night. And his will to love eternally the one woman he had come out to meet went down before that force which he acknowledged stronger. It was fate!

Close held in that look of his which would not release hers, Anne strove to break the spell of his nearness.

"Margot didn't meet me. But I kept on."

He nodded, as if he knew it must have turned out so, and placed the lilacs in her lap. They lay against her white linen dress in a chaos of lavender and purple and deep-tinted pink. Their fragrance came up to her and set her trembling.

"You shouldn't have brought Margot lilacs!"

His gay eyes still held hers. There was no escape.

"I know. She hates them. But you do not."

She buried her face in them.

"They are the flowers I love best!"

His voice above her held her and caressed her as his eyes had done.

"I knew it while I picked them! On my way, there was an abandoned garden. It was lawless and neglected. There were other flowers there—iris and early roses. But, you see, I knew!"

His English was without accent, but

he brought to it the pleasant precision of those who have acquired it after having been reared in another tongue.

Anne raised her head and looked at him again. He was smiling. The intensity was gone. He was, as Margot had told her, the vagabond adventuring gloriously. Ah—and the thought was like a sword, a two-edged sword that wounded Margot and made her own heart bleed—now he was the Jacques that Margot loved!

Apparently he took it for granted that they were to go on their way together, but he did not move to the opposite side of the car. He asked, instead:

"Shall I drive?"

It was more a demand than a question, and Anne realized that, while the Holworths of earth might allow a woman to take the place of mastery when it suited them to be lazy, the Jacques never paid that price for ease. Silently she relinquished her place at the wheel and sat idle, her hands clasping the lilacs. His eyes were fixed upon the shining roadway, and his face was a profile under the closely curling hair. Anne had a chance now to notice that its darkness was thickly threaded with silver, that the gayety of his eyes was contradicted by the lines about his mouth. The small black mustache did not hide them. Yes, this Jacques whom Margot loved—she must not forget that!—had known tragedy as well as joy. The marks were upon him.

"Where are you taking me?" she asked.

He flashed at her a look that seemed to place a meaning on her words deeper than her intent. But his answer was commonplace enough:

"Not much farther now. We'll turn down the next road and leave the car. We shall run no risk of returning to find it gone. The inhabitants of this country have not evolved far enough

yet to covet gray roadsters with nickel mountings. They have not yet become resigned to railroad and two trains a day. They look upon them with suspicion."

"I'm wild about this country!" Anne exclaimed. "It's taken possession of me!"

The insuperable gayety that made his audacious charm danced in his eyes.

"Of course. What else could it do? Is it not *my* country?"

"And Margot's," against her will she reminded him.

He did not answer, only looked at her with eyes from which the gayety had gone.

Their silence lasted until he stopped the car under the tall hickory trees where an old fence collapsed into a straggling heap of gray rails. On the other side was sunlight on coarse wood grass, and then trees. Silently he waited while she stepped down from the car. Side by side they entered the sun-warmed clearing. Above the tall, coarse grasses, the fairy globes of dandelions gone to seed quivered on their hidden stems until they seemed unattached and floating low like an army of pale soap bubbles. And all the time Anne was thinking—and the thought was like a chill wind striking across her mood of warmth and exaltation:

"These are the places he takes Margot! These are the places he takes Margot!"

As if he read her thoughts, suddenly he stopped and looked at her with eyes that were the soul of truth.

"I have not been here before since I was a boy. This is the beginning of all things that are different and new and perfect."

Yet it seemed that Margot's country willed that not long should they forget her. For, as they walked through the shaded places, they crushed pennyroyal underfoot. They had not known it was there until its pungent, penetrat-

ing odor sped up to them from out the dew. Neither spoke the thought that each knew was in the mind of the other:

"Margot!"

But, with the thought, a smarting moisture sprang to Anne's eyes.

"It is as if we stepped on a heart!" she murmured, and, looking up at the eyes above hers, it seemed to her that their gayety came down to her through tears.

"The heart should not have been there!" His sudden strength touched the bounds of brutality. It was thus he sought to expiate his momentary weakness.

"But it is, and we have no right to hurt it!"

"Ah, but that is fate," said Jacques, "the only thing in life that is stronger than will!" Then, as one who renders an ungrudging tribute, "Margot is incomparable!"

On they went, silent for the most part—out from the wood shadows into the sunlight again, down the narrow path that took them to the ruins of an old limestone quarry. In a silence that was like death, its perpendicular sides sprang from the green, still water that filled the rocky bottom. Darting swallows touched it with their wings. It had the repose that makes the peace of ruins.

"I love it!" Anne spoke softly in the silence that was like death. "There's something Egyptian about it—these straight gray walls rising from the water, I mean—as if a pyramid were laved by the sea instead of by sand!"

"It was a busy place once—men toiling, picks ringing, derricks creaking." He brooded for a minute. "Ruins are always restful. They say: 'It is finished. We have no longer fear—or hope.' Hope is as unrestful as life itself."

Anne crouched in a crevice of the rock, her knees arm clasped. She felt

the warmth of the sun-steeped ledges and was content. Abruptly, through her laziness, Jacques was thrusting facts that hurt.

"Margot has told you that I am married?"

Anne nodded. Why need he remind her? Then she understood it was that spirit of truth she had encountered before in his eyes that urged him. She must receive him as he was, whether it hurt or not.

"My wife is very gentle—very sweet. She is the kind of a woman who does not demand a man's passion. I feel for her affection and admiration—and pity! The last I keep to myself. She is not unhappy. She has her children. They are bound to come first always, with a woman of her type. She is pleased that they come first also with me. My little girl is eight. My boy is four. One must not allow the name to die. That is what I owe my family. And I am an only son. The arrangement has not been unsatisfactory. But there has never been love, and where there has been no love, there can be no real unfaithfulness. Unfaithfulness is not of the body, but of the soul! One woman I have loved, and to her I have been faithful. I groped for something. A man like me must have love in his life. It is my right. I did not demand that the love should be perfect. I was impatient. I took what was at hand. I should have waited for the perfect thing—or gone without. I have loved imperfectly, and I have been faithful. Can you guess what I would do for the woman to whom I could give a perfect love?"

Was he telling her that for her he would hesitate at nothing, even to the breaking of Margot's heart—that golden heart with its laughter and its wildness and its faith? She shook her head.

"Nothing perfect lasts for more than a day. Perfect things have no future

and no past. They are complete in the present."

She was not sure herself exactly what she meant him to understand, but, looking into his face, she saw that he took it as a promise. Well, maybe that was what she meant it for. Let him take it as he would. She washed her hands of responsibility. What was written was written.

He sat beside her in the warm niche and, pulling a box of cigarettes from his pocket, offered her one. She shook her head.

"You do not smoke?" He smiled. "Well, I shall teach you. Your first lesson shall be lighting this one for me."

He held a cigarette and the box of matches out to her with that audacious boyishness that made his charm. Almost persuaded, the thought of how often Margot had done this for him made Anne turn away.

He was not insistent. That was not his way.

"No? Then I will defer the lesson and light it myself."

The little match flamed in the stillness, and the fragrant blue smoke curled from the cigarette.

"Let us forget everything and just be happy," said Jacques.

His gay eyes wooed Anne's stormy ones. His changing face was a reckless gypsy's. Looking at him, Anne wondered if she had been mistaken in reading tragedy there. He was a faun, a creature of the sunshine, pagan and joyous. He was the warm, bright South, and the deeper, enduring passion of the North stirred in answer to him. Oh, if for this one day she might be prodigal, if she might give herself to joy, if she might obey him and forget! But though the thought of Holworth's smug proprietorship had no power to move her, it was not so with Margot's flaming love. It flashed before her like the sword that barred the way to paradise.

Sitting before her there, smoking incessantly, he talked to her as no man had ever talked before. He brought every delicacy and strength of expression and laid it at her feet. What another man might have expressed in touch, he gave her in words, in look, in voice. She was his lady of the lilacs, his lady of the North, his snow mistress with eyes of storm and lips of endless summer. It was written! She was his fate.

Breathlessly she took what he bestowed and drooped above him there, faint and wistful. It was as if she knew that into these few hours must be condensed the joy that others might trail out through a lifetime. She longed to heap upon him the treasures that, in an ordinary acquaintance, are conserved. In this one day they had, they must not miss a thing, a single thing. Where others said, "For life," they said, "For minutes." Had not these hours been given to them that they might know each other perfectly? Fate had made the decision, not they. If only the same Fate that would separate them after the hours were over would decree that, while the hours lasted, no thought of past or future should divide them! But there it was always, Margot's love, keen and flashing, barring the way. Jacques was a gypsy man. He was careless of barriers.

The sun rose high in the heavens and blazed down into the still green water in the limestone basin. Its burning reflection hurt Anne's eyes. The swallows had ceased their swift dartings. Nothing stirred. The silence had them both in its spell. Blinded by the brightness that flashed up to her from the green mirror of the waters, Anne beheld Jacques' face as through a smoke cloud, dim and stinging.

She laughed.

"The sun on the water has made me blind. I can't see you!" She put out her hand gropingly and touched him.

"Ah!" With the sign of one who yields at last to a force that he has been combating, he pulled her down to him. He kissed her eyes, her hair, her lips, and in his kisses there was all rapture and all pain. This was the rapture to which Margot had dedicated her life, and this the pain!

Then it was over, and she was looking down at him from her niche and saw that the mask of gayety had left his face—that it was white and tense, and that his eyes were windows for an untold passion, naked and unashamed. Ah, surely this was a revelation for her alone! This was not the face he had shown to any other woman under heaven. This was the secret soul of the Jacques that could love her perfectly.

"You can not escape it," he said. "It was written that my love should come into your life."

She saw their separation as inexorably decreed as their meeting, and denied him with affirmation:

"This one day was written."

"And other days. They shall be written, too!" He was the fatalist who denies his gods when they offend him.

She shook her head.

"I can't see the writing, can you?"

He did not answer her. It was a way he had when confronted with truths that he wished to ignore.

By and by he left her and went back to the car for the luncheon that she told him was there. And even in the thin salmon sandwiches, with their green lettuce leaves and juice of fresh lemons, and the three little bottles of red wine, there was reproach, for had not part of everything been meant for Margot? The wine had been her donation. She had made it herself from Aunt Angelique's purple grapes.

How swiftly the sun that was so high when he had kissed her was slipping down toward the horizon! Their day would be over soon!

He had begun to plead with her again. His gay eyes begged compassion.

"Do you know why I do not touch you? It is because I do not dare. It must be all or nothing between us. If I kissed you again, there would be no choice!"

Did she not know it? There would be for her no going backward. She would follow him forever as Margot did, and wait upon his will.

"It can never be all," she told him.

"It cannot end here!"

"End? Does anything end that can never be forgotten?"

Desperately he confronted her with the prosaic facts that would put an end to their romance:

"I am taking the train that comes across at one-thirty."

She answered drearily: "Yes."

Of course it would be so. That was the one Holworth was coming on. The same train that took this strange, ardent, questing Jacques away from her would bring Holworth back to her forever. Oh, that of course! Conventional and calm and content, he would be with her forevermore!

"If you would only tell me that you want me, I'd go through hell just to see you sometimes!"

She did not answer him.

The half moon was big and low in the west. The woods were breathing out the night odors. They smelled pennyroyal. The bunch of lilacs he had given her lay spent and drooping before them as they came back to the car.

He had ceased to plead. He accepted her decision, which was not hers, but Fate's. He wrapped her in her thick coat and took his place at the wheel. The motor whirled and beat. The car pushed its way slowly out upon the road. They were speeding from out the shadows into the moonlight. The

long stretch of the Garrison Road lay before them illumined.

And the lilacs! From every farmhouse yard and garden, dew-drenched and delicious in the shimmer of the moonlight, they tossed their intoxication riotously out upon the night. The roadway was awash with their waves of perfume. Anne found herself fighting against the enchantment as a weary swimmer fights against drowning. Was Jacques fighting, too? Certainly his profile there in the moonlight looked like the frozen features of one who contends to the death.

He stopped the car at the corner where she had met him, and got down. Mechanically she moved to his place and took the wheel. Amid the whirring of the motor, she let him go from her and went on alone. It seemed to her that the car went lamely like a wounded thing, and that she was part of it.

The smell of the lilacs in the cottage yard beat upon her as she left the car in the improvised garage. She felt bruised and sore. She could not bear it. She went up to her room and closed the windows against the flood of perfume. She understood how one might come to hate it, as Margot did.

Through the little windowpanes, she could see the low-lying half moon in a thin cloud mist, and the silver-green waters of the lake. Along the shore a big, bright glow traveled silently. It was the last train from the picnic grove. The rattle of the dinkey engine was deadened by the wind. It was rising, and its strong, gay song overtopped all other noises of the night. All this she saw vaguely, blended with her own reflection on the panes, mixed and made incongruous by the rays of the lamp on the bureau across the room. She turned to blow it out, and discovered Margot's letter propped against the mirror.

"Something told me that Jacques was not coming to see me to-day, after all.

So I stayed at home. I knew you'd understand, when I did not meet you at the crossroads, that the thing was off, and that you'd return to your perfectly good husband. I can always tell when Jacques isn't coming—always. He wills me to know. I can feel him coming nearer, and all day I have felt him going away from me. So I stayed at home and wept! Imbecile, wasn't it? Jacques is the most erratic of men. Another woman might doubt, but I believe. I shall hear, in a day or so, that he was called to some remote place on business. He may not come all summer now.

"I am sorry—most for myself, of course, but some for you. I wanted you to know Jacques, the unpardonable, and see what a real flesh-and-blood man, who isn't afraid of having emotions, is like! And, besides, until he has stood the test of meeting you, Viking Anne, I shall never feel quite sure of him. Of course I don't mean that. I have my moonstones for luck! It's only that anything beastly might happen to me when the lilacs are out."

Anne was reading the letter over when Holworth came up the stairs and loomed, correct and godly of proportion, under the low ceiling.

From the look of supreme satisfaction that enveloped him, it might have been concluded that the slight irritation he had felt at her for not accompanying him that morning was gone. He was politely solicitous of her welfare.

"Ah, you're up late, my dear. Have you had a pleasant day?" But it was evident that what engrossed him was his own experiences. "Everything went off most satisfactorily. Johnson and Jones were most interested in my book. They will be unprecedentedly liberal with royalties. Only I must get the copy into their hands in six weeks. There are a number of formulæ I must verify before I make my final applica-

tions. I shall have to be where I can consult the university library. We shall really have to leave here this week. I must get home."

She made no protest. The prophecy had been fulfilled. There was nothing to wait for now.

Holworth divested himself of his dinner jacket and placed it carefully upon the back of a chair.

"Manson was at the dinner. He hasn't got out a thing since that book of his three years ago. Unable to work, he says. He's quite broken down. You'd hardly know him. It's that sad affair of his wife's, you know. If nothing else had kept her from running away with that young architect, the thought of Manson's work should have been enough. A woman should do nothing that will spoil a man's work. That's the unpardonable crime. That thought alone should keep her from folly, if nothing else will—the duty she owes to her husband's career."

Holworth's high-minded selfishness was too familiar to Anne to cause her to smile, and yet a fluttering amusement

played for a moment about her mouth. Something, certainly, had kept her from "folly" that day. Why had she closed the book of romance that had been offered her and gone back to her husband and his textbooks?

While the smile flickered and died, she searched for the reason by a process of elimination.

It was not because of the lawfully wedded wife of Jacques. She saw her calm and beautiful and white as marble—and as unyielding. It was not because of Holworth and his career. The smile deepened. And, oh, most surely it was not because of herself, her reputation, her safety. As Margot had said once, they might go hang. Oh, that was it! It was because of Margot, dedicated to one great passion, illicit, if you will—Holworth would call it that—but of a radiant, incomparable beauty supremely dominating the low places of lesser, legalized loves. Yes, that was it. Margot's love was like the hills of which David sang. One might lift one's eyes to it and find strength to go on living in the valley.



UNSHRIVEN

LET you not say of me, when I am old,
In pretty worship of my withered hands,
Forgetting who I am, and how the sands
Of such a life as mine run red and gold
Even to the ultimate, sifting dust, "Behold,
Here walketh passionless age!" for there expands
A curious superstition in these lands,
And by its leave some weightless tales are told.

In me no lenten wicks watch out the night;
I am the booth where Folly holds her fair;
Impious no less in ruin than in strength,
When I lie crumbled to the earth at length,
Let you not say, "Upon this reverend site
The righteous groaned, and beat their breasts in prayer!"

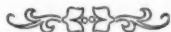
EDNA ST. VINCENT MILLAY.



The Hind Legs of An Elephant

By Ethel M. Kelley

Author, of "When I Was Little," etc.



LIFE is a humiliating experience at best, but peculiarly so if one happens to be a rather shy man who wants to be married. I am, and I do. I went to Black Harbor because I knew practically no one there, and I wanted a self-respecting solitude in which I could combat the growing conviction that no woman would ever consider me fit to live, much less to live *with*.

The spring season in New York had proved to be almost more than I could endure. It had been a series of the grotesquely painful experiences that a sensitive man encounters when, without conviction or much understanding of the rules of the game, he tries to turn hunter. The sister with whom I had lived since the death of our parents—a delicate, timid little being, whom I had always regarded as a congenital spinster—had suddenly, the winter before, been swept into the arms of her cave man and gone the way of all women.

The hour before I gave her into the keeping of the picturesque mountain of red hair and freckles and brawn who represented her ideal of a haven from the vicissitudes of the world, she spent in advising me to follow her example. Living, she adjured me, was merely a meaningless, jangled experiment without the culminating experience of love and matrimony. I was constrained to agree with her, and not only to agree, but to promise her that I would do my best to bring my life to its fructifying climax as speedily as possible.

The promise that I made my little sister on her wedding night may have been wrung from me, and it was, by the emotional exigencies of the occasion, but it was coinstantaneous with my own inspiration and desire. When I saw little Mary in her flowing veil, with her little satin-shod feet peeking out from a wonderful adaptation of our mother's wedding gown, I straightway wanted a bride of my own as I have never before wanted anything on earth—and, moreover, I resolved to have one.

I have never been very much at home with women. I am a very busy man, and I make a good deal of money. In teaching myself how to make that money, I have rather neglected the other important things in life. I can talk to men, but they haven't that habit of gazing earnestly into your face and raptly misunderstanding everything you say that women have. They don't seem to be making that mysterious demand upon you all the time.

"What is it you *want*?" you feel like saying to women. "My money or my life or that odd little gold charm that I am wearing on my watch chain?" And yet you feel that, if you said that, and they heard you, they would continue to turn on you that strange, disconcerting, *acquisitive* little look of theirs that seems to mean at once nothing and everything.

"I know half a dozen girls that you could have for the asking," my little sister said to me on that momentous

evening. "You're considered a confirmed bachelor, without any use for women, but you only have to make up your mind and put out your hand and you can have almost anybody."

For the moment, I believed her, as we do believe the most incredible encomiums of our strength and character at vulnerable moments, and the idea was wonderfully exhilarating. I had no particular woman in mind. I wanted a woman who was warm and blushing and sweet, who looked like my sister Mary in our mother's wedding gown, and who would look at me as she looked at the red-headed Trojan she had chosen to espouse. Since all the world was full of marrying and being given in marriage, I thought, with my transfigured little sister, that a marriage of my own would be comparatively easy to arrange if I chose to set about it.

I couldn't get it right. I did my best, in their own vernacular, "to be nice" to them, but they would not have it. They accepted my invitations with the air of swallowing my insults at the same time, and they still had that mysterious eye out for the shadow of that thing just beyond me that I was not man enough to produce for them. I couldn't get their attention, much less concentrate it to the marrying point. As for putting out my hand and taking "almost anybody"—even my black cook despised me for a dull and unenterprising specimen of masculinity.

The cumulative episode of my adventures with the fair took place just before I left New York. I was nosing slowly down Fifth Avenue in the spring twilight, in my little French car, when I was caught in a pocket of traffic for a few minutes and forced to stop on the far side of the crossing. There was a young woman standing on the curb—crying. I was exactly abreast of her, and our eyes met, the tears streaming from hers, mine, I hope, properly respectful and solicitous.

"Can I be of assistance, madam?" I asked.

"The buses are blocked," she answered desperately. "I've been waiting here for over half an hour. I must get down to West Eighth Street. It's a matter of life and death."

"Get in," I said. "I'll have you there in no time."

She climbed in beside me.

"Thank you," she said gratefully, "thank you."

She was evidently laboring under the pressure of some great excitement. It was two or three minutes before we could be off, and in those minutes I came to a conclusion about her. She was the sweetest woman I had ever seen.

We made the trip practically in silence, but when we reached the address she had given me, I put my hand on her arm.

"I can't let you go like this," I said, "when I've only just found you. There must be plenty of people we know in common who could introduce us to each other. I want to help you through your trouble."

She shook herself free of me.

"I expected this. It was a pity you couldn't have let it go as a simple act of service. I have no money except this"—she presented me with the dime she had evidently been intending to pay her bus fare with, and I was so stupefied by her attitude that I took it—"and if you ever annoy me again, I shall report you to the police."

She looked at my number, and then hurriedly ran up the stone steps of the house I had brought her to and, ringing, was admitted almost immediately. After that, there was no other woman for me. There couldn't be.

At Black Harbor, there was a nice, free little summer colony. I liked my rooms at the inn, which was run with unusual imagination and was also very comfortable, but my self-respecting

solitude was more or less interrupted by an ubiquitous horde of young people who regarded me as sufficiently elderly to take advantage of my unattached condition. Carroll Eustace, a silvery blonde with dimples, was the ringleader of this galaxy of youth and charm, and she was fond of backing me—or anything else masculine—into a corner, while she rapidly explained the part that I, or the victim in question, was expected to play in the program of the week's festivities.

"Oh, Mr. Blakely," she cried, one clear August morning, as I was starting out on a fishing trip and already late, "what part are you going to take in the circus next week? All the hotel guests are going to be in it, you know. I'm going to be a leopard, and Teddy Barrows is going to be a——"

"Teddy Bear?"

"Yes, how did you guess it? And Chuckie Lawrence is going to be a wart hog, and so on, and so on. What shall I put you down for, Mr. Blakely?"

I had passed a night of vigil, spent sleeplessly reviewing my limitations and the disillusiones to which they had laid me liable. I did not feel like a very impressive or dignified character that morning. I hadn't even been able to find a man who wanted to go fishing with me.

"Oh, you can put me down for the hind legs of an elephant," I said bitterly, with an unwonted and unbecoming sarcasm. "That will just about define my status in the world."

I left her staring after me bewilderedly, her pencil poised high in air, and gave the matter no further thought.

Some days later, when I was indulging in the unprecedented luxury of an afternoon nap, the bell boy, a fat farmer's son—or a farmer's fat son, I should say—woke me up sharply for the privilege of delivering to me a note, addressed from the inn itself in the huge,

neat hieroglyphics of the youngest generation:

DEAR MR. BLAKELY: Please come at once to the tea room and get fitted. We are all here and waiting. We do not know what to make the tusks of, but we have a lovely trunk almost done. Please hurry, as we want to utilize the daylight for the fine stitches. Tug Watkins is going to be the front legs, but you will have to do all the trumpeting, because he will have so much else to manage. I will tell you the rest when I see you. If you have any other engagement this afternoon, please put it off. We need you now. Faithfully, despite the rush in which this is written,

CARROLL EUSTACE.

"Answer, sir?" asked the fat bell boy.

"There is no answer."

The boy still lingered.

"She said I was not to come away till I got one," he blurted out.

I tried to frame my protests on paper with the boy looking on, but failed miserably.

"Tell her I'll answer in person," I told him presently, not even then suspecting that my appearance in the tea room was to seal my doom irrevocably.

That a silver-haired, blond baby should have aroused me from the first deep sleep I had fallen into in weeks in order to read an ingenious epistle, couched in young-girllese and concluding with the pregnant line, "We need you now," was a sufficiently disconcerting incident. But when I realized that little Miss Eustace's literal mind had translated the bit of barbed self-disgust inadvertently provoked by her importunity into a promise to take a part in the outrageous asininity of an amateur circus, I was overcome.

I have always found it difficult to laugh spontaneously when I am in the midst of a group of people. I am easily keenly amused, but I do not find my amusement simple to express except in an environment where I feel perfectly at home. While I was dressing to go down, I decided that the only way

the situation could be met was humorously. I ought to present a laughing face at the door of the tea room, deliver myself of a few trenchant, satiric sentences on the nature of the mistake that had been made, offer to donate generously to the enterprise for which the entertainment was given, and get out, leaving Carroll Eustace the object of some good-natured banter. This was my plan. Presenting the laughing face was my difficulty. As I stood before the closed door of the tea room, listening to the echo of the merry voices within, I was sincerely glad that I had never made any attempt to go on the stage.

Carroll Eustace opened the door in my face, disclosing the smug pink-and-gray interior of the familiar room lined with unfamiliar faces—laughing faces.

"Oh, here you are!" she cried. "I was just coming for you myself."

She dragged me into the room and indicated a cardboard canopy cunningly draped with gray flannel and braced on two chairs. Gray flannel dripped and exuded and trailed from every available crevice or surface in the room, or so it seemed to me.

"Isn't he going to be lovely?" she asked ecstatically.

"My dear child," I cackled—the laughing-face business having been hastily relinquished, I still tried to adhere to my program—"this is one of those unfortunate prac—"

"Step into this," a brisk voice at my elbow suggested. "Carefully, because it's only pinned yet. My name is Elsie Fergus, Mr. Blakely. I can't wait for any one to introduce us. This is the right. The left isn't ready yet, because we cut them both alike by mistake. They're made of cardboard, the feet are, and then wired to give the big, floppy look. They'll be covered, you know, when they're done, and you just wear a soft tennis shoe. An elephant always lifts his hind legs so much

more than his front ones, don't you think?"

I had been helped into one leg of a huge pajama made like a child's bed suit with a foot on it, only this foot was huge and misshapen.

"I can't think—" I began.

"You don't have to," Miss Eustace cut in. "We'll do all the thinking for you. All you have to do is to obey instructions exactly. You won't have much to do, only to manipulate the two trumpets—blow on the little one when you wish to convey the impression of pleasure, and the big one when any one makes you angry. They'll probably hit the hind legs more than the front, and whenever anybody slaps you, why, you must bellow as loud as you can. The front legs set the pace, and you must be terribly careful never to get out of step. We thought a little dance would be nice. You'd have to practice it a lot—but you do any kind of a dance, even when it isn't meant to be funny."

Miss Fergus led me up to the canopy and, skillfully removing one of the chairs, substituted me for it. The top of the thing rested on my head, the gray curtains fell around me. For the moment, I found sanctuary. The buzzing in the room, which I had only half heard in the acuteness of my embarrassment at being the focus of so many eyes, increased to a tremendous volume.

"We're not going to give you any peepholes. They spoil the effect." Miss Fergus and Miss Eustace were both talking. "You'll have to stoop over quite a lot," one said. "He ought to give the tail an occasional switch," the other suggested.

I burst out from my enveloping flannel, desperately determined to appeal to the populace.

"Of all the nonsensical ideas—" I began, but I was so entangled in the smothering gray material that I had to crawl out of the canopy before I could

continue. I was conscious of making a frenzied, attention-compelling gesture as I prepared to begin again.

At the window to my left a pure profile in silhouette arrested my eye. The girl's lips were slightly parted. She was regarding me with amusement not unmingled with interest, the amusement of an onlooker at a legitimate performance. My entanglement with the hind foot and torso of an elephant was to her a predicament in which I had good-naturedly placed myself. There was a tinge of recognition in the look she bent upon me. It was the woman who had paid me ten cents for the service rendered in driving her to the house on West Eighth Street.

I turned to the Misses Fergus and Eustace, who stood regarding me speculatively, shoulder to shoulder.

"Let me give the tail an occasional switch, by all means," I agreed amiably.

The day of the circus was one long stretch of unmitigated anguish for me. On looking back, I cannot understand how I ever survived it. The rehearsing in the presence of groups of ill-assorted people was bad enough, as was also the interminable adjusting of different anatomical details of the terrible creature to whom I had pledged myself to lend animation. Once committed to the undertaking, I had not the poise necessary to elude the responsibility it entailed. I made the tusks myself out of white drawing paper, rolled into cone-shaped protuberances, and the Eustace child helped me to twist a fairly lifelike tail from some of the surplus yards of the ubiquitous gray flannel. I felt all through as if I should never be safe again from the possibility of being taken literally at my word in matters either mundane or spiritual. I should scarcely have been surprised if the protective coloring in which my nether limbs were incased had taken on the actual quality of elephant hide, while

the tortuous canopy over my head assumed a vicious corporality.

I had one conversation with Miss Hathaway, the lovely lady to whom, indirectly, I owed the consummation of this diabolical adventure, since but for her I should have summoned the courage to put a stop to it before it was too late. She was staying at the inn, and various well-meaning people were always introducing us to each other.

"Did you come through your trouble all right?" I asked her desperately, on one of these occasions.

"My father had been taken dangerously ill, but he is well again now," she said. "Thank you for asking me."

"Thank you for telling me," I said.

"Thank you for realizing that I did not mean to be as rude as I was. I was too excited to understand, at the time, how kindly you meant what you said."

I was having so much trouble with the elephant business just then that I could not be natural. I wanted to smile, but could not manage it. Miss Eustace was standing beckoning to me as usual, so I murmured an apology and plunged in her direction.

This little scene came back to me very vividly as I adjusted the weight of Pansy's hind quarters—the name "Pansy" had been decided on after much nerve-racking discussion—to my head and shoulders and took up the two trumpets with which I was to communicate to the world the syncopations of delight or disgruntlement of the alleged Pansy. The presence of Miss Hathaway on the scene of action was the last thorn in my crown of chagrin. No experience could have been as painful to me as that of performing as I was scheduled to perform in her presence.

An open field, with a group of transparent trees to convey the illusion of sanctuary for the participants, had been chosen for the affair. Miss Fergus and I—Tug Watkins had been found totally inadequate to the part assigned to him

—entered Pansy's interior in the public library and joined the procession just outside. From thence we made our way to the field where a crowd of several hundred people were impatiently awaiting our appearance.

We came rather late on the program. There was a tight-rope dancer to begin with—a lady with the waist of the Venus de Milo and none of her other proportions, very executive in pink muslin skirts to her knees. The tight rope was, of course, not lifted from the ground. There was a bareback rider on a rocking horse, little and dainty, who strangely created the power of illusion with the courage of her unaccustomed stage paint. Some of these New England women need a circus costume to bring out their qualities. I realized that even at the moment of my most acute discomfort.

The wart hog was a pinky-brown animal with pill boxes stuck all over him, and manipulated by a round young man in shell glasses. Of course I did not see my own performance, but I cannot help feeling even now, when I look back on my ordeal from a disinterested perspective, that Pansy's act was very much more professional. Madame Eurydice's Concertina Company took up a great deal of time. Most of the troupe gave individual numbers—songs and dances and ventriloquist acts and the like.

I found the interval of waiting very trying. Miss Fergus had slipped out of her end of our common shelter, and sat on the grass with the gray elephant's legs stuck out in front of her in complete unself-consciousness. I preferred to remain inside, with Pansy's trunk over a tree to brace up her unoccupied proportions. My shoulders were terribly sunburned and smarting from recent exposure on the beach, and I had a blister on my foot into which my tennis shoe cut cruelly. I could see what was going on outside only by lift-

ing the gray drapery at the side and stooping to look under the edge of the canopy, while I held the erection in place with a hand where my head ought to be. I could breathe a little that way, too.

Once, when I looked out, I saw Miss Hathaway's delicate face turned animatedly in Pansy's direction, which stimulated me to look again and discover her in earnest conversation with one of the best-looking men I have ever laid eyes on—a perfect stranger to me, but very far from a stranger to her, evidently. The perspiration stood out on my forehead. It was so like the sort of thing I had come to expect of life. My self-immolation in the hind legs of an elephant while the woman I was growing to love smiled into the eyes of my rival was a situation that, except for its ridiculous detail, I might almost have forecast from previous experience.

Pansy's appearance was greeted with vociferous applause, to which she responded with a gracious bow, accomplished by Miss Fergus kneeling while I suddenly sprang erect. Carroll Eustace was our trainer, and under her direction we proceeded to sit in a chair, ring for our dinner, die for our country, salute the flag, and finally do a well-chosen little dance—one-two-three-kick, one-two-three-kick, one-kick, two-kick, three-kick, four-kick.

These evolutions were very difficult, physically and mentally. Sitting in a chair merely meant that I groped backward blindly until I was sure of my seat and received Miss Fergus in my arms. But dying for our country was a more serious business; we had to keel over to the left at a given signal in a kind of stage faint that no amount of practice had taught me to do without severe injury to myself. My entire surface was like a piece of old-fashioned calico—a white groundwork covered with blue polka dots. I limped slightly in the dance that followed.

Pansy was the hit of the entertainment—there was no doubt about it. She was called out for encore after encore. After that, she moved among the audience, Miss Fergus being fed cake and peanuts and ice-cream cones by the delighted onlookers—which she ate without offering me any, though neither of us had had any luncheon—and I, at my end, receiving the cuffs and blows of boisterous good-fellowship that I had been led to expect.

I had only one moment of satisfaction during our peregrination. A girl policeman moved among the audience, arresting and fining various members of it who might be expected to contribute to the cause of the French sufferers—the performance was given for the benefit of the French wounded—without too much pain on their own part. A college president gave up a dollar for not being sufficiently amused by the program; an elderly banker was arrested for flirtatious behavior; and the Adonis by Miss Hathaway's side was fined two dollars for arriving after the performance had begun. Miss Hathaway gave us a piece of sponge cake and a doughnut. If it had not been for the fact that my voice would have been perfectly audible to every one about us, I should have asked Miss Fergus for that doughnut.

Everything has an end. It seemed for a while as if Pansy's performance were going to be an exception to that rule. She was so popular that every suggestion of her retirement was greeted with vigorous public protest. She made her escape finally by stampeding among the side shows and intimidating a real kitten, a bull pup in a white-fox fur, and a little girl dressed as an incubator baby, to such an extent that, in the general excitement, she made her get-away.

Life is, as I have said, a humiliating experience, but it is never a consistent

one. We never quite touch bottom, my little sister says, and she belongs to the sex which has appropriated most of the wisdom of the world since Solomon's famous corner in it.

As I sat in the seclusion of the deepest shadow on the hotel porch that evening, Miss Hathaway, of her own accord and volition, came out to find me there. We spoke of the performance, and the proceeds thereof, and the inadequate exhibition of the wart hog, in detail. I tried to amuse her with an account of my sufferings in that thick gray-flannel interior. I was glad to turn them to that much account. I thought, wearily, that we might count ourselves fortunate if even our most devastating experiences could be useful to make somebody's dainty little ladylove a holiday of sorts.

"My brother thought you were wonderful." She smiled.

"Was that good-looking young warrior your *brother*?" I asked incredulously.

"Of course."

"Thank God!" I said, without explanation of my devoutness.

"You hated it, didn't you?" she asked presently. "The whole thing?" She smiled as if she understood what I had been enduring.

I did not answer her.

"You went through it like a hero, though. I never saw a more chivalrous, and altogether thorough, exhibition of gallantry in all my life. I came out here to tell you so, and to tell you, also, that it is one of the humiliations of my life to think that once upon a time I misunderstood your chivalry entirely."

It seemed a strange thing for her to be talking of humiliation. I didn't know that women were ever humiliated. I did not know that a creature like that—so delicate, so altogether beautiful and fine—could ever suffer from any-

thing remotely approaching humiliation.

"You hated it, didn't you?" she repeated softly, smiling into my eyes temptingly, tantalizingly, maternally.

"I love you," I said savagely, "and I shall always love you. It's a part of the terrible, grotesque series of experiences of this day that I should sit up here and tell you so in cold blood, but I can't be any more tortured and miserable than I've been since this intolerable performance began."

Then I told her the reason why the miserable harlequinade had been thrust upon me. I poured out the whole story of my dismay and disgust, and all through my tale, I punctuated every other sentence with the fact of my love for her. I took a savage delight in destroying myself.

When I was all through, she put out her hand to me.

"You poor dear!" she said. "You poor darling! I think you are wonderful, in this day of congenital egoists and men who don't know any reverence! If you think that my falling in love with you will make it up to you the least little bit, I warn you I've been doing it ever since I came up here."

"You can't be!" I groaned. "It's all wrong! I'm not a——"

Miss Hathaway viewed me contemplatively.

"I honestly don't think," she mused finally, "that you've any idea that, in addition to your other qualities, you're almost phenomenally good looking."

"What? Me?" I asked, gasping, incredulous.

"Yes, you," she answered.



IN CITY HALL PARK

(A New York Silhouette.)

YOURS is an ugly city!" So they jeer.

"Raw, crude, and sordid—beauty dwells not here!

A mining camp, awash with blood and gold,

A mart where tawdriness is bought and sold!"

I wonder have they heard
Roar of the Row break on the northern stairs
Of City Hall, hiatus for the host,
When Maytide laughs and lights the crimson flares
Of tulip torches; trees are feather-green—
And once one held a tulip-feathered bird,
A shy, strange scarlet tanager, unseen
And silent as a little lurid ghost.
Last, loveliest marvel, lifting through the clear,
Making a frame all nobly Florentine,
The great twin arch of stone the Bridge upflings. •
I wonder have they felt it, they who sneer—
Beauty that hurts the heart, that soars and sings!

MARGUERITE MOOERS MARSHALL.

More Super-Women

By Anice Terhune

Lais:

The "Lioness Siren of Greece."



A TRIO of Athenians, boon companions, had started out for a morning's walk. The brilliance of the day and the distant blue sparkle of the sea had put them all in holiday mood. Their acknowledged leader was a spare, delicate-looking man, whose face glowed with energy and fire. His every word was listened to with reverent eagerness by his friends.

Heads in the clouds and mindful only of their lofty talk, the course of their walk led them toward a magnificent palace. Behind the white marble pillars of this palace lurked a crowd of pretty girls.

One, far lovelier than the rest, peeped out at the approaching men, then darted back unseen, her brilliant eyes brimming with mischief.

"Easy prey!" she whispered to her maidens, with a smothered laugh. "Follow me, quickly!"

Then, dropping her look of mischief, she assumed a haughty, regal pose, spread her shimmering, jeweled draperies peacockwise, and paced slowly down the palace steps. The other damsels, with demure, downcast eyes, followed at a discreet distance.

At sight of this multiple vision of loveliness, the three men involuntarily halted. The spare ascetic with the eyes of fire stood agape.

"Who is she?" he stammered, in wondering admiration. He always stammered when he was thrown suddenly off his guard. Only by talking with his mouth full of stones, for hours each day, had he mastered, in part, this defect, which had once made him a local laughingstock.

"Lais!" answered one of his friends. "Lais—professional beauty, temptress, sorceress, a woman as greedy as she is beautiful! That palace shining in the sun was built, stone by stone, from the frozen blood of men's broken hearts. Do not look at her! It is fatal! And, besides, your devotion will cost you a year's income in a day. She refuses to be in the least interested for any less sum! Turn away while there is time!"

At this, the other, being very wise indeed, turned his back on temptation and said with a sigh:

"A year's income in one day is too high a sum to pay for the privilege of repenting!"

Lais stamped her foot with vexation, for the man who had just made a hair's-breadth escape from her spider's web was Demosthenes, wisest Greek of his day and greatest orator, high-minded, incorruptible, out of reach, and therefore most fascinating to the spoiled beauty. She had expected him to be the easiest of victims—and he had

merely stared and turned his back on her! Things went badly for her attendant maidens the rest of the morning. Lais' disposition was not her strong point.

In fact, she did not need a disposition. Her loveliness and magnetic charm had set all Greece aflame. She was so famous throughout the ancient world that her name became a synonym not only for beauty, but for avarice as well.

Even though she had failed to lure Demosthenes to her feet, yet the news that he had stared at her, and had asked her name, spread fast through Greece, as did his epigram on the high cost of repentance. For Demosthenes hitherto had been deemed "one whose brain and heart were under the iron control of the spirit," and his momentary mental lapse in Lais' direction did more to enhance her glory than would the captivating of a hundred lesser suitors. And Lais made the most of it, none recognizing better than she the sweet uses of advertisement.

Into a nation of devout beauty worshippers, Lais had blazed her shining way. Coming from no one knows whither, she had appeared in Athens unheralded, and certainly unhonored. As a priestess of the most ancient, if not most honorable, profession in the world, she swiftly made herself the most famous woman in Greece. Supreme in beauty and in mystic superwoman lure, she was in no way trammelled by heart or by scruples. She was as frankly mercenary and unsentimental as any war profiteer. She held a monopoly, and was not minded to let the market slump.

Wherefore, word went forth that each and every successful aspirant for her favors must pay the sum of fifteen hundred dollars a day for the privilege of being acknowledged as her lover. I do not know the local tariff for such matters in the fifth century, B. C. But

Lais' price list was far enough above par to be preserved as a historical fact throughout the ages.

One redeeming grace lifted her above the muck. Were an admirer ever so rich and ever so famous, he could not gain from her so much as a smile—to say nothing of the privilege of paying fifteen hundred dollars a day—unless he also chanced to appeal to her capricious fancy. Thus, many a millionaire, many a world-noised statesman and general, was turned as unceremoniously from her door as were the swarm of penniless and worshipping youths who besieged that marble portal.

For all this discrimination—which may, perhaps, have been a superstroke of business—wealth poured in upon the lovely Lais. And little of the golden avalanche slipped through her fingers. She was a thrifty soul, in spite of her rejection of so many wealthy admirers who did not interest her. Her fast-increasing fortune was safely invested, and with its surplus she built for herself one of the most exquisite palaces in all that city of glorious architecture.

A gruff old cynic—more bear than man—had lately acquired a vast reputation, on much the same grounds as does the small boy who throws mud at the deacon's silk hat—in other words, by insulting and browbeating every one in sight. He was Diogenes the Elder—not the Diogenes who ordered Alexander the Great to stand out of his sunshine. The public at large seemed to relish his wholesale ill treatment, and strove cringingly for his good will.

But Diogenes let it be known that he despised such servility and that he cared for no one. He "cared for no one"—until, ascending the Acropolis one day, he was forced to halt in the narrow path, to allow the passage of a cloth-of-gold litter borne high on the backs of four giant slaves.

Diogenes, with a grunt of contempt at such a vulgarly tawdry display of

wealth, sulkily permitted himself to be elbowed out of the way of the glistening litter. Mumbling cynic scorn at its unseen occupant, he stood in the gutter until the obstacle should have moved on.

As he stood there, the litter curtains languidly parted. For the fraction of a second, an amused face, framed by the shimmering folds, stared down at the man who had reviled the gaudy equipage.

It was the loveliest face in all Greece—the face of Lais, the hetæra. For a moment only, Lais' eyes met the grouchy philosopher's, but that instant was long enough to turn Diogenes' black scowl into a stare of incredulous wonder, and then into a look of stark adoration.

At once he changed his pious intent of going to the hilltop temple, whither he had been bound. As fast as his knobby and philosophical legs would carry him, he ran downhill in pursuit of the vanishing litter. A half hour later, he forced his way into Lais' palace and into her laughing presence. There, pompously, he made known to her his high-famed identity, and declared himself a suppliant for her love.

Two minutes later, at their mistress' imperious order, a troop of maidservants, with shrieks of laughter, were shoving the poor old philosopher down the marble steps of the palace and into the dusty highway.

Broadcast flew the tale of the terrible Diogenes' humiliation. And the fame of Lais waxed brighter than ever.

Her next suitor of note was Aristippus, another philosopher, gentler and more human than Diogenes. Aristippus was one of the wisest men of his day. Yet, before the glory of Lais' beauty, his armor of wisdom melted like snow. He worshiped at the hetæra's shrine, and made no secret of his all-encompassing devotion.

Philosophy has never been a money-

making trade. Few of its devotees have fifteen hundred dollars a day—or a year—to squander in the pursuit of love. Aristippus certainly had not.

So he was content with a platonic worship of his divinity. He sought to immortalize her, too. For he dedicated to her every book that he thereafter wrote. And these books lived for many centuries, carrying the name of Lais to every quarter of the earth where philosophy was studied. Could any lover—then or now—have thought of a more perfect way to keep alive the memory of his love when he himself should be dust?

Let us pass over the rest of her admirers, shan't we, and come to the great love of her life? Nearly all of our super-women have had one—and only one—such love, a love that has avenged most bitterly the sorrows they have wrought on other men.

Athens was a thrill with excitement over the coming Olympian games. Athletics, as well as beauty, formed a goodly part of the Athenian religion. The hero of the Olympian games won but a simple laurel wreath in actual prize, but his victories raised him to a higher pinnacle of fame, for the time, than that of any other man on earth.

The Olympian games were held but once in four years, and every athlete in Greece spent the intervening time in training for them. No man who had not been victor in at least one "event" before he was thirty-five years old was allowed to compete again, the Greeks thus antedating Pershing in their estimate of a man's physical value after his thirty-fifth year.

As the time for the games approached, athletes flocked in from every quarter of the archipelago. To each and all of these, the Greeks accorded the same ardent interest as the daily walk of a heavyweight champion nowadays rouses in the breasts of schoolboys. To be an Olympian athlete was

to be a hero, even as to be an Olympian victor was to be the man of the hour.

To Corinth, where Lais was taking a course of sea baths, came one of these athletes, on his way to the games. He was Eubotas, of Cyrene, foremost runner of his region. And at Corinth he met Lais.

Eubotas was young, magnificently handsome, and with such a figure as the Greeks delighted to perpetuate in marble. For the rest, he was obscure, a rustic, and without wealth. But at sight of him, Lais forgot his poverty and lack of fame. She even forgot her fixed fifteen-hundred-dollar rule. In fact, she forgot everything that, for her own peace of mind, she should have remembered. For the first time in her garish life, she fell in love—wildly, blindly in love. The woman who had flouted the most renowned men in Greece threw herself, helpless, at the calloused feet of this rural athlete.

Now, the fame of Lais had long since traveled as far as Cyrene. Eubotas, vastly flattered at her preference, reciprocated with joy the hetæra's avowals of love. There was a brief, rose-hued honeymoon. Then Eubotas passed on to the Olympian games.

He took with him Lais' heart. He took with him something more tangible, in the shape of her jeweled portrait. He left behind him his solemn oath that, if he should win at the games, he would come back to Corinth for her and take her home to Cyrene with him, there to abide in rustic rapture so long as they both should live.

It was a pretty dream and one that thrilled Lais as nothing else had ever done. She, who had lived for pleasure and for wealth, and who had smashed men's hearts by the score, looked forward blissfully to life in a mountain hut with the rough athlete she loved.

There was, perhaps, nothing new in the situation, even in the fifth century,

B. C. Assuredly there is nothing new in it now, nor was there when *Camille* left Paris to bury herself in the country with *Armand*, or when Marie Stuart threw away her royal destiny to elope with the brutish Bothwell.

But to each new set of lovers, each old situation is divinely new and as divinely wonderful. So it was with Lais, the hetæra, as she tarried alone in Corinth, waiting yearningly for the return of her god man from his victory at the games.

She did more than merely wait. She hired relays of fast-riding messengers to bear to her the tidings of Eubotas' race.

Just why she did not go to the games in person, thus ending the suspense at once and saving messenger hire, I don't know. History is silent on this rather interesting point. History has an exasperating futuro-cubist habit of dealing with effects rather than motives. At any rate, Lais stayed where she was—and waited.

At last—a long, long last—a messenger spurred a foam-smeared horse to the door of Lais' Corinth villa. Before the tired steed could come to a halt, Lais had rushed out of the house and was gripping the bridle, feverishly demanding news of her lover.

"Eubotas won his race!" panted the messenger.

Lais fell upon her knees, stuttering fervid thanks to all the gods in high Olympus. She vowed to them more costly votive gifts of thanks than every royal treasury in Greece could have paid for. Then she interrupted her torrent of theocratic almsgiving to demand the details of her sweetheart's victory.

These she again interrupted, to ask of the messenger how quickly he thought Eubotas might be expected to reach Corinth.

"Not for many years, from his present direction," was the reply. "I have

word that he has already set out, by another route, for Cyrene!"

When she was utterly exhausted from the thousand synonyms for "liar" which she heaped upon the bearer of these evil tidings, Lais sent forth other messengers to learn the truth. One by one, these returned, verifying the word she had already received. And at last there could no longer be any doubt, even in a mind so foolishly eager to trust.

Eubotas had won his race, had received the coveted laurel wreath, and had gone home to his own far-distant village, making a detour of Corinth in order to avoid the adoring woman who was waiting there for him.

He had sent Lais no word of explanation. To this day, no one knows why he deserted the all-desired superwoman in the very heyday of their mutual love. The fact that he was her accepted lover, for whom she had thrown away the world, would have given him renown throughout Greece even more than could the winning of the laurel wreath, and would have brought his name into poets' songs. Her wealth would have lifted him far beyond his humble station. Her love would have made him envied by every lover on the archipelago. He had everything to gain from the affair, nothing to lose. He had not even had time to tire of the woman of whom no man had ever tired.

His desertion of Lais is a mystery which has never been solved. What became of Eubotas is not recorded. One likes to think that visions of the golden hetæra sometimes arose mad-deningly between him and the brown-skinned, splay-handed Cyrenian country wench whom he probably married in her stead. If so, this was his punishment—this, and the ridicule of the ages.

One more fact about Eubotas is recorded by every historian who has told the story of Lais. It seems the Cy-

renian athlete was a man of high moral sense in the matter of keeping promises. He had sworn a solemn oath to take Lais back to Cyrene with him in the event of his winning the races. This oath could not be ignored, and Eubotas fulfilled it in true Greek fashion. He still had with him the jeweled portrait of Lais, which she had given him as a farewell present on his departure for the games. This portrait he faithfully carried back with him to Cyrene, declaring that thus he had kept the letter of his oath.

Peace to his petty, corkscrew-shaped soul—if he had one!

For a long time Lais was a mental and bodily wreck. The desertion of the one man for whom she had ever been able to care drove her to an illness that all but took her life. Slowly, very slowly, she crept forth from the valley of the shadow, but all that was worth while within her had died.

Eubotas' desertion had turned her from a gay-hearted girl into a devil. Her beauty survived her long illness, so did her matchless charm; but she used both, henceforth, for the wanton destruction of mankind.

To avenge herself for the torture wrought by one man, she declared war on all members of her recreant lover's sex. Hitherto, she had chosen her lovers through caprice; from now on, she chose them for the harm she might do. She wrecked their fortunes and drove them to beggary or suicide. Artfully, she stirred up quarrels between her admirers—quarrels which she lashed on to the point of murder or of mortal combat.

Her name grew to be a symbol of death and desolation. Her rapacity waxed with the years. And she used her vast fortune for the injury of men.

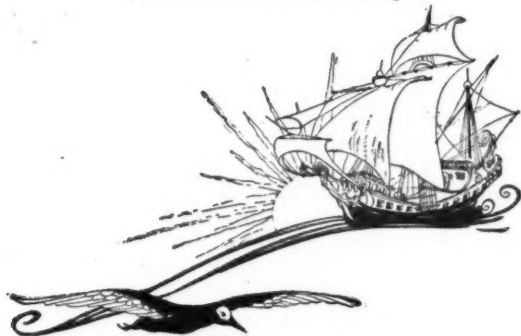
This career of devastation did not suffice to dull the ache of her heart, and she turned, for surcease, to drink.

And drink avenged Lais' victims, even as she had avenged herself for Eubotas' fickleness. For it smashed her constitution, ruined her peerless beauty, and left her an elderly and hideous wreck.

Enough of her fortune remained for her to gratify one last whim. As death

drew near, she designed and built for herself an enormous tomb. The monument above her mausoleum bore a life-sized statuary group, planned by Lais herself as an emblem of her own past life. It represented a lioness tearing to shreds a helplessly bleating sheep.

Next Month: Louise of Stolberg.



WOMAN—A PRAYER

I HAVE loved women's faces
Time and again,
But I would rather be
Somewhere at sea
With the foaming sea races,
The sea without stain,
Than all the embraces.

I would rather watch a river flowing,
Or a flower growing,
Or the swallows that skim,
Or the fish as they swim;
I would rather watch the moon rise,
Or the coming of morn,
Than look in the eyes
Of woman born.

I would rather watch the wild bees
All my days,
And give God the praise,
Than woman and her ways.
From all her sorceries
On us poor men,
Save us, Lord God! Amen.

RICHARD LE GALLIENNE.



As Gentle as a Child

By Du Vernet Rabell

Author of "The Woman Michael Married,"
"Not Even a Sinner," etc.

THIS is the regulation triangle story; it's about a girl, a man, and a dog. Yes, I know that it's quite unusual to have a dog at one point of the triangle, but Superdreadnaught was an unusual dog. Duncan Kittridge, the man who owned him, said he was, and everybody agreed with him; only nobody else meant it the way he did. Super was some dog, or rather all dog, and while I have no doubt that most of the things that Duncan claimed for him were true—about his pedigree and minor details like that—he was no household pet. If he didn't like you—and Super confined himself to a limited circle of friends—he let you know it at once. Oh, nothing ordinarily disagreeable, like growling, barking, or snapping at your heels. He merely looked at you out of wicked little red eyes, and you felt no doubt at all as to his sentiments where you were concerned. And if he did like you, it was worse. He cherished the idea that he was a lap dog, and Super weighed seventy pounds, and was bow-legged, and had a face like a Chinese devil mask.

But in spite of this, if you accepted Duncan—and of course everybody *did* accept Duncan—you had to accept his dog. He was positively unreasonable about it. The only person toward

whom he did not enforce his rule of "Love me, love my dog," was Tevis Owen. She frankly disliked Super and told Duncan flatly that she would not have him about. And Duncan accepted her edict, because he said that Tevis amused him, and that a good laugh was the rarest thing in the world. Another thing—he hoped in time to make Tevis change her mind about his dog. He told her that Super improved on acquaintance. But Tevis declined to give him many chances to prove it.

So one morning, when she called Duncan up at his office and told him that she wanted to see him about something important at four-thirty that afternoon, she was at particular pains to add that he was not to bring Super.

And yet, in spite of this admonition, when Duncan alighted from his roadster in front of the Owen house that afternoon, he was accompanied by a large English bulldog, who upset a tub of box standing on the stoop and all but upset Duncan trying to squeeze in at the front door ahead of him. If Super knew that he was an unwelcome guest beneath the Owen roof, he didn't act as if it depressed him at all.

Tevis swept into the drawing-room dressed, or rather wrapped, in a long, clinging garment, purple, green, and warm red, with a string of jade beads

hanging almost to her feet and her sleek, dark hair bound flat about her small head. She trailed languidly into the room. But her languidness dropped from her like a cloak when she perceived Super about to sink to slumber on one of the rose-and-gold sofa pillows.

"I told you not to bring him!" she said indignantly to Duncan.

"I meant to leave him in the car," Duncan explained, "but I forgot his leader."

Tavis continued to eye Super, who was wrinkling his face at her in a terrifyingly ingratiating manner. Tavis was a favorite of his.

"We can't talk when he's here," she complained. "When that dog is around, you can't concentrate on anything but him. I don't see why——"

Duncan didn't let her finish; it was an old subject to him.

"What are you doing dressed up in that rig?" he demanded.

Tavis sank gracefully down among the pillows of the couch.

"It's a new costume—from a new modiste. She believes in dressing my type."

"Yes, she does—not!" Duncan denied at once. "If so, why doesn't she put you in a short skirt and a middy blouse?"

Tavis dignified no answer to this. She sat up slowly, her hands clasped in front of her, and fixed her dark eyes compellingly on his face.

"Corinne Costello is going to be married. That's what I wanted to see you about."

Duncan eyed her suspiciously.

"Well, she has my best wishes. But—now get this, Tavis—the ceremony will be conducted without me. I have ushered for the last time. If you knew how many times——"

"Duncan Kittridge!" Tavis interrupted in shocked amazement. "Do you know who Corinne Costello is?"

"I do not. But I'll hazard a guess that she's an old school friend. You apparently went to school with half these United States, and none of them can get married without your assistance. I wonder why. Is it because you are agreeable or ornamental? I think the bride takes a chance. The groom is so apt to regret that he didn't meet you first. Quite a pretty speech, don't you think?"

"Yes, and it means as much as most of your pretty speeches—and is quite beside the point. Oh, Duncan, you are too exasperating! I asked you here to discuss something of great importance, and, as usual, you want to conduct the whole interview along the lines that please you. I wonder why I have anything to do with you."

"Easy. You can't help it. I draw you like a magnet, because I represent one of your few failures, and you have me about because you cherish the eternal hope that one day propinquity, similarity of tastes, and opportunity—the triple alliance that has upset the world on more occasions than one—will get in their fine work, and you will bring me to heel. Well, go on hoping. Hope is a beautiful thing. It waters the seed of ambition. Is that an epigram, I wonder?"

"It is not." Tavis turned away, on the verge of tears.

Duncan glanced at her briefly.

"Now for the news," he said briskly. "Don't you see that the suspense is setting my nerves on edge?"

"I did tell you the news," Tavis answered sulkily, after a moment. "Corinne Costello is going to be married. Oh, Duncan," she hurried on impatiently, "you know who Corinne Costello is! Why, you've seen her on the screen a dozen times. She's Bruce Buckingham's leading lady!"

"Bruce Buckingham—Bruce—— Oh, I get you! He's the hero in chaps and

sombreo whom you drag me to view when I can't escape."

"Yes—although I don't think you put that very politely."

"Sorry. And is this Corinne person the lady in spangles and shoulder straps who is always endeavoring to lure him from his own true love—and often with deplorable success?"

"Yes."

"All right. What's the rest?"

Tevis tilted back her head, and her dark eyes narrowed.

"Look at me—look closely."

"What for? I've seen you lots of times, and—truth compels me to declare—in clothes I like better than the ones you are wearing."

Tevis ignored this.

"Haven't you heard many people say that I look like Corinne Costello?"

"I have not. And if I had, as your friend, I would have choked the slander at its birth. Corinne looks like a cross between a snake charmer and a cigarette maker, and you look like a nice little girl with a clean neck and neatly brushed hair, who might, if asked, accept an invitation for tea in the country."

"I would not! Oh, Duncan—I could cry!"

"Well, don't. It would make you messy—and I'll bet those weird colors would run. However," and he took Tevis' hand and sat down beside her with an air of grave attention, "my performance is over. Go to it, kiddie. You're among friends."

Tevis smiled and settled with relish to her theme.

"Even though you won't admit it, Duncan, I do look like Corinne Costello. The resemblance is most marked. Ever so many people have noticed it. Now, they say that Bruce Buckingham is absolutely dependent upon her in his pictures. Well, she's going to be married and leave the screen. I saw it

in the paper this morning. So what is Mr. Buckingham going to do?"

"Search me!"

"Oh, Duncan," and Tevis leaned forward eagerly, "this is the opportunity of a lifetime for me to realize the dream I have had for months! I want to step into Corinne Costello's place!"

Duncan opened his lips for an immediate response, and then some sudden thought made him close them again. He walked to the window, where he stood looking out, jingling his keys until Tevis nearly lost her mind.

"But, Tevis," he said presently, his voice judicially considerate, "doesn't such a position require years of training?"

"Oh, my, no!" Tevis answered, with the blithe confidence of total ignorance. "It's merely a matter of looks. And I do look like——"

"Yes—maybe you do. But as I remember the lady, there are these differences: Her face, everything about her, is sharply defined—like a black-and-white sketch. Now your chin is round, your nose is short—and while your mouth is attractive, I dare say, it's not definite enough in outline——"

"You needn't point out any more of my personal defects," Tevis interrupted coldly.

"I'm not pointing them out as defects. I'm using them as comparisons. You're an impressionist painting of this Costello girl. But that, from what I understand, is not what they want on the screen."

Tevis apparently thought better of losing her temper. She leaned forward with sweet persuasiveness.

"But, after all, Duncan, that's merely your opinion. You must admit that. So won't you help me?"

"Won't I help you? How? Why, I never even go to the movies——"

"You don't need to go to the movies. What I want you to do is to meet Bruce Buckingham—men can arrange those

things so easily—and then present him to me."

For a long moment, Duncan eyed her in hostile silence. Then he burst out:

"I certainly thought, Tevis Owen, that you had more sense than to lose your head over a movie star!"

Tevis displayed much exasperation.

"I haven't lost my head. But how can I get to be his leading lady unless I know him?"

"You couldn't anyhow," Duncan retorted, his voice snapping like an X-ray machine. "Those jobs don't lie around loose, to begin with, and your father would never let you accept it if they did."

"Father has nothing to do with it. I have my own life to live, my destiny to fulfill. You needn't laugh. That's in one of those Russian books everybody is so crazy about. And anyhow," she concluded with charming logic, "father always lets me do as I like—in the end."

"I know it—and if he had spanked you oftener in your youth, he'd have left considerably less disciplining for your husband to do."

Duncan prepared to leave, and Super rose stretchingly after a final snore and prepared to accompany him. In the doorway, he met Coles coming in with the cocktail tray—Tevis always mixed her father's cocktail—and after a brief encounter, Coles retired, his notice plain in his eyes.

"Now he'll leave," Tevis observed gloomily. "And father says he's the only man we ever had who could make a sauterne cup. Oh, don't whip him!" she cried protestingly. "You only hurt him—and it doesn't do him any good!"

"If a few of these people who profess to dislike my dog would let me discipline him occasionally," Duncan muttered, "much might be spared us all."

But Tevis met Bruce Buckingham. These things have a way of coming to

pass. Mr. Owen, the last person in the world who would have done it willingly, brought it about. He belonged to a fishing club up in Maine, and another member, having used his own season's guest card, asked Owen to lend his. Owen was indignant at first.

"Does Morely think we stock those streams for the whole country to fish?"

Tevis said soothingly that she hoped not.

Owen was just finishing an exceptionally good dinner, and as he sipped his brandy, his tone perceptibly softened.

"But I suppose Morely meant all right. This Bruce Buckingham may be a nice enough chap. Tevis, take your foot off the buzzer. I don't want the table cleared yet."

"And, anyway," he continued, an unwonted silence from Tevis giving him a rare opportunity to be loquacious, "this Buckingham doesn't want to fish. He just wants to come up for a rest. He's an actor or something. Suppose I let him have my card. What do you think?"

Tevis appeared to give this her earnest consideration. In reality, she was getting a good grip on her voice.

"Well," she remarked slowly, "I dare say it would be all right. If he wants to rest, he wouldn't be in anybody's way."

A week later, she ostentatiously consulted Duncan Kittridge concerning a fishing costume.

"Nothing for practical use," she explained. "Something becoming. I am to meet Bruce Buckingham."

"Oh, I thought you were getting it for me. And I was so sorry to disappoint you. I'm not going up to the club this year, so that boy-scout outfit, which, no matter what you say, I know you planned for my undoing, will have to wait. Later, perhaps—but I can't promise. I have a new fancy. Some lily maid, believe me! She's a fluffy

blonde—you know my type. Her hair is like gold spun on fairy looms, and when I touch it——”

“When you touch it!”

“Don’t grow green-eyed. I haven’t touched it yet. But who knows? I am an ardent wooer——”

Bruce Buckingham was not at the club when Tevis arrived, and she was vaguely disappointed. She had cherished a dream of his coming forward to be presented in the firelighted living room, as she entered in her brown-leather motor togs. Tevis rather fancied herself in these. But he wasn’t there, and Mrs. Beemis, the steward’s wife, didn’t care if he never came.

“One man short in the dining room, the cook scolding all day, and no upstairs help,” she muttered.

But she thawed when Tevis obligingly offered to prepare the rooms that Mr. Morely and his guest were to occupy.

Tevis worked quite hard at her self-appointed task. She took the pink dimity spread that Mrs. Beemis always reserved for her bed, and put it on the bed across the hall which Bruce Buckingham was to occupy; then she tied back the ruffled curtains with fresh white cords, and put two bowls of mountain laurel on the table by the window. The room looked very inviting—when she left it.

Later, when she looked in at it, she stood in the doorway and stamped her foot. Bruce Buckingham had not arrived, but Duncan Kittridge evidently had, for curled up in the middle of the bed—the bed that had been immaculate—was Super, soundly sleeping to recuperate from his journey.

Tevis whirled at the sound of footsteps behind her.

“Duncan Kittridge, look what your unspeakable dog has done! Look at that bed, simply covered with mud!”

“Good morning, Miss Owen,” Dun-

can responded with grave politeness. “Haven’t you rather forgotten your manners? As to the bed, it’s his own bed. He always sleeps there.”

Super had leaped to the floor and was covering Tevis’ hand with moist canine kisses. He was very fond of Tevis—a beautiful affection which she let no opportunity slip to inform him was totally unreciprocated.

“I didn’t know you were coming up,” Tevis remarked unpleasantly.

Duncan laughed.

“Now don’t flatter yourself that I came up to watch your campaign to ensnare the movie man. That doesn’t interest me in the least. It’s because of my lily maid. ‘Absence makes the heart grow fonder.’ I don’t believe it, but I’ll try anything once. And then, too, I write the most charming love letters——”

But Tevis had crossed the hall to her own room, and now her door—well, not exactly slammed, but closed with decision.

Duncan followed her and knocked smartly.

“Will you please loan me some of your note paper, Tevis—your best? And if you have leisure in an hour’s time, I’ll let you look over my composition—parts of it. It might come in handy in your own affair. And, Tevis,” he added, “will you please let my dog out? You took him in with you, and knowing your dislike for the poor brute, I won’t let him trouble you.”

Buckingham was expected the next day in time for luncheon, but didn’t arrive. However, Morely did, and said he couldn’t understand his friend’s delay. Duncan consoled Tevis pleasantly and tactfully, and nearly had his head taken off for his pains. He appeared to be greatly offended at her attitude, but once on the porch, he took Super’s square head in his arms and rocked with laughter. Of course Super didn’t

know just what the joke was about—when it came to jokes, Super was typically British—but he didn't mind being hugged, and knocked off Duncan's new helmet in his efforts to reciprocate. Then he stepped on it, and Duncan got mad, and ordered Super to stay at home for the rest of the afternoon in punishment for his clumsiness.

Later, Tevis found Super sunk in gloom in one corner of the porch and took him for a walk with her. And right from this moment, Super began really to earn his place in the triangle. Not but what he always had had a right to it; he gave Duncan and Tevis something to quarrel about, and Duncan was the type who would rather exchange verbal shafts with a girl than be amused, entertained, or even charmed—that is, charmed in the ordinary way.

It was almost dark when Tevis turned back toward the club. Super had enjoyed himself hugely, rolling from one side of the road to the other, sniffing at the gopher holes, and growling fiercely at the various wood smells that drifted to his city-trained nostrils. He was panting along some two or three hundred feet in front of Tevis when she stepped aside to let a motor pass.

It was a small car, but very important, and it was apparently planning to arrive somewhere in a hurry. Tevis whistled to Super to get out of the road.

But Super continued serenely on his way, disregarding both Tevis and the importuning horn. Tevis called out sharply. She didn't pretend to like Super, but she didn't want to see him killed before her eyes. The car slowed down, but the horn continued imperatively. Super went right on ambling down the road. Beyond one brief glance over his shoulder, he gave no indication that he knew there was a car within miles.

There was one final honk from the

horn, angry, insistent, and then, just as Tevis shut her eyes and hoped she wouldn't scream, she heard Super snarl. Her eyes flew open in time to see him whirl and seize the front wheel of the car.

The driver shouted, and the car zig-zagged across the road and finally brought up in the ditch.

The driver scrambled from behind the wheel, which was tilted at a dizzy angle, and waited for Tevis to come up. It was too dark to see his face, but she could see that he was tall and imposing, and the minute he spoke—which was at once—he made his state of mind unmistakably clear.

"What do you mean by having a dangerous brute like that at large?" he demanded.

"He isn't a dangerous brute!" Tevis retorted. "He's as gentle as a child."

"As gentle as a child! As gen— Look at my wrecked car and repeat that if you dare!"

Tevis repeated it without looking. She never took a dare.

"I shall make a complaint against him in the next town."

"Go ahead! And I'll complain that your driving is such that the highways are unsafe. You tried to run over my dog—"

"I had the right of way! If I had a gun, I'd shoot that brute! See the way he is looking at me!"

"Shoot him?" Tevis cooed. She laughed, and her laugh was no thing of sweet music.

She and the motorist exchanged a few more verbal skyrockets, and then he turned and busied himself with his car. Tevis doubtless didn't add in any way to the efficiency with which he tried to get the car out of the ditch. She sat on a wall close by, Super seated beside her, and looked on with exasperating interest. Presently the man stamped off in the darkness, and Tevis, after dancing a little derisive dance in

the middle of the road, went home, well pleased with the afternoon's entertainment.

That night at dinner, she told the men assembled about the long table of the encounter. She told a story well, too. She imitated with her slim white fingers Super's ambling, heedless gait; she imitated the bark of the motor horn; and she ended by imitating the man's pompous gestures and self-important manner as he stood in the road conducting his case.

"And he said, 'Young woman——'" The tale was drawing to a close when her eyes happened to wander from the ring of laughing faces to the door.

Two men were standing there. One of them was Morely, and Morely appeared to be having the time of his life.

"So you are the girl of Buck's adventure," he laughed, coming into the room. He turned to the man beside him. "Joke's on you, Buck. May I present Miss Owen? Tevis, this is Mr. Buckingham—Bruce Buckingham." He continued his introduction around the table.

Under its cover, Duncan Kittridge leaned toward Tevis.

"La Rochefoucauld has it that a man can forgive a woman everything but ridicule. What did you say about being Bruce Buckingham's leading lady? Good night, Corinne!"

And Tevis for once admitted that he was right without argument.

But it is a poor general who cannot save some remnant of his army, and even retreat need not mean complete disaster. That night Tevis met Buckingham in the upper hall. The light from the lamp on the landing fell on her pretty, embarrassed face as she tried to think of a correct form of apology—something simple, but dignified. Then a sudden impulse made her desert this form of attack. She held out her hand and laughed frankly up into his face.

"I'm far too fresh," she declared with deplorable slang, "but even you must admit that I got mine."

Buckingham held out his hand in a fine gesture and returned her smile.

"Let's pretend that we've just met, shall we?" Tevis suggested next. "That this afternoon never happened? Shall we do that?"

Seemingly Buckingham was willing, for half an hour later, Duncan Kittridge, coming up the stairs, found them sitting in the alcove on the landing that overlooked the lake. They were talking with deep interest, and if there were any other souls on earth, apparently they neither knew nor cared.

Duncan, who believed in the old adage regarding two being company, would have continued on his way, but Super had no such delicacy. He hurried onto the landing and squeezed by Buckingham, thereby interrupting that gentleman in the midst of a telling speech. He put both paws in Tevis' lap and demanded her immediate and undivided attention. Duncan called his dog and then, his dog being deaf to the summons, had to go after him.

Conversation languished after his arrival, and finally Tevis rose, with the remark that she had just realized how late it was. Morely called Buckingham from the foot of the stairs, and Duncan walked with Tevis to the door of her room.

"Trying to make Buckingham a member of the chain gang?" he inquired affably.

"I don't know what you mean," Tevis replied with dignity.

"No? Well, you're often stupid. Brains and beauty, twin stars that would make astronomers of all men—how rarely do we see them! Now I know, Tevis, that that is an epigram!"

With that he whistled to Super, who was sniffing at a leather case across the way, and walked down the hall. He turned back with the air of one giving

a bit of friendly advice, sure to be welcome.

"I commend your method, Tevis. You play up your charm with this Buckingham. There's nothing sure about your ability—and, anyhow, these temperamental stars are not so keen for ability—in other people."

Whether Tevis was following his advice or her own original plan of campaign, I don't know, but she was certainly as charming as she knew how to be in the days that followed. She walked with Buckingham, she sang to him, she read with him in a sunny corner of the veranda, and she fished with him—in the more secluded brooks. Her father warned her away from his own particular spots in no uncertain manner, after he had seen one example of Buckingham's casting.

"Come near blinding me for life!" he indignantly told Duncan Kittridge. "And as it is——" and he twisted about to scowl at a rent in the back of his trouser leg.

"He seems very much interested in Tevis," Duncan observed, putting his trout rod together.

"Um—well, plenty of people are interested in Tevis. But what she sees in him is beyond me," Owen observed.

"Oh, he's the type the girls like," Duncan said easily. Then, "And besides, you know, Tevis is something of a movie fan. She fancies she might take a shot at them herself."

"Now did that Buckingham give her that idea?" Owen grunted grimly. "I'll have a little talk with Tevis. That scheme is going to be nipped in the bud!"

"Oh, I wouldn't do a thing like that," Duncan said. "Opposition is usually just what Tevis needs to develop any of her fads into a fixed idea."

"Think so? Well, perhaps you're right." Owen was trying a promising pool under the edge of a jutting rock. "Maybe the best thing would be to let

her try the movies. She'd see where she got off quick enough." He spoke softly—out of deference to the trout.

"Tevis might develop great dramatic ability," Duncan suggested.

"Dramatic drumsticks! Developing something, even a little thing like dramatic ability, takes work, and Tevis wants to play. Oh, you're right. It's just one of her fads."

"And Buckingham? Is he one of her fads, too, do you think?" Duncan displayed a sudden interest in Owen's selection of a new fly.

"Oh, sure! They come and go. And take it from me, if this one gets much further—he'll go."

"How is it coming?" Duncan asked Tevis a few days later. "Have you got Buckingham to the stage yet where he's willing to risk you as a rival at his profession?"

"What a question to ask!"

"Isn't it? And expect a truthful answer." He paused and considered her speculatively. "I certainly can't say that I care much for the methods of the modern Diana. She pursues her victims too closely. Now my fancy—Heaven bless her golden curls!—is shy and retiring. I have to seek her out like the sun the violet. She doesn't run after me." He walked off down the path, but turned where it entered the woods to call back heartily, "Good hunting, Diana!"

After a week of fishing, the Owens returned to New York. But Tevis, despite a few pointed comments from her father, continued to see much of Bruce Buckingham. She talked with him about the moving-picture game whenever she had the opportunity, and two or three times told him laughingly that she would love to try the pictures some day "just for fun. I probably wouldn't amount to anything, although several people have told me I looked like Corinne Costello."

Buckingham failed to make the ob-

vious response to this. He was not at all interested in discussing the movies with Tevis. He had reached the state where the only thing he wanted to discuss was Tevis and himself. A good many girls had been foolish over Bruce Buckingham, and he had been foolish over quite as many girls, but Tevis Owen was different. Yes, I know that sounds like old stuff, but we don't mean the same thing. I mean Tevis Owen was somebody; she had a very definite position in New York—and her father was president of the Merchants' Loan and Trust. Oh, I am not claiming that Buckingham wasn't in love with Tevis. It's easy enough to fall in love. But it was sad of Bruce Buckingham that he could make the shrewdest business contract of any man in the game, and, after all, in these days of bustle and tussle, with a man a film idol one day and a has-been the next, it is well, where possible, to combine business with pleasure.

Bruce Buckingham had an unerring eye for the right moment. So one afternoon when he called upon Tevis—an afternoon filled with blustering wind and driving rain outside, and a warm fire and subdued lights inside—he decided that the moment had arrived for his big scene.

It was that witching hour between day and evening, the edge of twilight, when Cupid wanders about and plays hob with the best laid plans.

Buckingham assumed the correct attitude for what he was about to say. His white hand swept his blond, wavy hair back from his white brow, and he bent over Tevis, who sat in a big carved chair before the fire.

"We are friends, Tevis, are we not?" he asked.

"Oh, yes," Tevis agreed, and added brightly, "We're such friends that I'm going to ask a favor of you."

Buckingham didn't give her a chance to ask it. He felt that this was his

scene, and his director could have told you that he knew his rights. So could Corinne Costello—only she didn't call them rights.

"But you know, Tevis, a man comes to the point where friendship, sweet as it is, is not enough. He wants more. His heart calls out for it."

Tevis listened to this and wondered how she had let it happen. She wanted to be Bruce Buckingham's leading lady, but not to this extent—at least she didn't think so. Still— But no, she didn't love Bruce Buckingham. But who knew what might happen? When they were both stars in their profession, when they had that in common, why, love might come. Wasn't she silly?

So she said sweetly, when Bruce paused:

"Yes?"

"You know what you mean to me." Bruce sank gracefully to one knee. It was a familiar pose; girls from coast to coast who had raved over him as a lover would have recognized it at once.

"Love is the greatest gift of the gods," Buckingham declaimed. "And when it came to me— My God, what was that?"

Tevis freed her hand.

"What?"

"That noise! I hear a voice. We are not alone!"

Tevis switched on the table lamp, and the room sprang into light. Super also sprang from the couch where he had been lying, asleep as usual, and joined the party at the tea table. He looked with unfriendly eyes at Buckingham, and sat down at Tevis' knee.

Buckingham scowled blackly.

"How did he get in here?"

Tevis was annoyed. Her reasons for being annoyed were complex, but they existed.

"Duncan left him here this afternoon. His apartment is being redeco-

rated, and Super doesn't like the paper hanger."

"Ugly brute! Does he like anybody?"

"Oh, yes, he's crazy about me," Tevis laughed, feeding Super a bit of hot scone, which he gulped without due precaution, and then promptly looked reproachfully at her.

Buckingham's voice softened.

"But everybody is crazy about you." He tried to recapture his former mood, to take up his tender theme where Super had interrupted it, but it wasn't much use. Super declined to change his position, and it's pretty hard to hold a girl's hand over the head of a chaperon, especially if the chaperon is an English bull whose attitude is far from quiescent.

So finally Buckingham said:

"Tevis, when may I see you again? We can't let things rest here. How about to-morrow? No—hang it all!—I have to go out on location to-morrow."

"Oh, do take me with you!" Tevis broke in eagerly. "I've never seen you work, and I've asked to so many times. And then maybe you could introduce me to your director. A chance like that would mean so much to me."

Buckingham hesitated.

"Herbert would have a fit!"

"But if *you* asked him to give me a chance, he'd certainly do it. Just give me a small part to begin with."

Buckingham stared. Tevis apparently knew but little about the inside workings of the picture business.

"Afterward we could go for a ride," Tevis went on to suggest.

Buckingham jumped at this.

"Yes—and we could go on with our talk. I have so much to say to you—and you must listen."

"To-morrow, then, at ten," he called to Tevis, as he walked down the steps later.

Tevis was wildly excited, so much

excited that she called up Duncan to tell him about it, and incidentally to ask him to come and take Super home.

Duncan didn't display much interest in her chance to break into the movie game, and his sole comment, when she had finished her somewhat incoherent statement, was that he thought it a fool idea, but it being spring, every one was entitled to her or his bit of folly; some fell in love, some went into the movies, some—

"Yes—and could one do both?" Tevis interrupted softly.

"What?" Duncan said sharply. Then, before she had a chance to repeat her question, he said that he'd be over some time in the evening for Super, and rang off.

Tevis dined out and went on to the opera, and when she came home quite late, she found Super asleep in her father's study.

"Is that dog to become a permanent member of our family?" Owen asked.

"I told Duncan to come and get him," Tevis answered. "He must have forgotten."

"Um—he'll forget his head one of these days. I don't see what's the matter with Duncan of late. His mind is out gathering geese. He nearly drove me into the East River last night, and his bridge game— Listen to this, Tevis. I had the ace, queen, ten, and two small hearts, and they bid spades, and Duncan—"

Tevis listened with what patience she could, and then broke in:

"Duncan will have to come for Super first thing in the morning, as I have an engagement. Meanwhile, shall he sleep in your room or mine?"

"You're elected. Super is a noisy sleeper, and I need my rest. Anyhow, he'd rather sleep with you. He likes the twin beds in your room and he fancies himself under that rose-pink quilt."

Well, Duncan didn't come the next

morning, and Mr. Owen absolutely forbade Super's being left in his house. He said he had just got used to the new staff of servants and saw no reason for a change. So there was nothing for Tevis to do but to take Super with her. When Buckingham strolled up and saw Super occupying two-thirds of Tevis' little roadster, he was plainly disgusted. It wasn't a large car, and Super took up lots of room and made it plain from the start that he didn't care to be crowded.

Now Bruce Buckingham may or may not have had an interest in Tevis' future as a film star, but he had a vital interest in his own future as James Owen's son-in-law. This being so, he decided that Herbert, the fiery-tempered director, must be persuaded to give Tevis a chance to-day if it were possible. Buckingham felt that if Tevis were disappointed in her chance to show Herbert her possibilities on the screen, she would be in no mood to listen responsively to the beautiful love scene he had staged for the afternoon.

Herbert looked Tevis over and sniffed. He was not a pleasant man and far from polite, but he was quite important, so I dare say he didn't have to be polite. But after a bit of persuasion from Buckingham, he said grudgingly that he might be able to use Tevis in the early part of the afternoon.

When the time came, Tevis was on tiptoe with excitement. She left Super in another part of the big studio, with a man who claimed to like dogs, while she listened with almost painful attention to the outline of the scene that Herbert was giving her.

"She probably won't make any more of a mess of it than the rest of them have," he growled to the camera man. "This picture has gone wrong from the start. It's a good script—but this one scene kills it."

Tevis tried desperately to look like

a woman who, after years of separation from her husband—years filled with disaster and disgrace—meets him for the first time before the judge's bench in a courtroom. And she didn't in the least look like this woman, much less act like her. She looked like a well-bred, perfectly assured young thing with years of soft ease and pampering behind her, and she acted like a little girl about to have her hands smacked before the whole class.

In the picture, the husband fails to recognize his wife. She pleads with him, begs him to look at her—look closely; he must remember her! But no, the cruel husband shakes his head. And then—

Why, then Super arrived upon the scene and walked with dignity into the picture. He paced deliberately up to Tevis and pressed his square head against her clasped hands. And everybody looked, and gasped, and was too shocked at this terrible thing to do anything.

"Let go! Keep her going!" Herbert yelled suddenly, waving his hands in excitement. "That's it! Just what we wanted! You see—you see—the dog recognizes her—recognizes her after all these years. There—all right!" And he turned and joyously hammered the camera man on the back.

Tevis was puzzled, but pleased. Evidently she had made good. But she had only a few moments in which to enjoy her little thrill. She said a few words to Herbert; she was so glad that he liked her work—something like that.

"Huh?" he demanded. You know I told you he wasn't at all polite. "What's that? Say, kid, you're off, 'way off. Your work was rotten. You all but killed the scene. But your dog—oh, your dog! Say, he's an artist—got screen instinct! I'll take him. He'll make a name for himself!"

And Buckingham stood right there

and let him say it, and didn't kill him or anything! Tevis was furious. She didn't realize in the least that Buckingham was far too good a business man to quarrel with his director.

He went away to dress, and Tevis didn't wait for his return. She walked across the yard of the studio and got into the car, almost blinded by her tears of disappointment. She stepped viciously on her starter, and the car shot ahead so fast that Super all but broke his neck clambering aboard.

Halfway down the steep hill that led to the ferry, there was a loud explosion from one of the rear tires. A small boy called out from the sidewalk: "You got a blow-out, lady."

Tevis got out and surveyed the tire. Then she walked down the block and got her garage on the wire. But they didn't give her much satisfaction. The Owens' chauffeur had left to meet Mr. Owen, and—no, ma'am, they didn't have no one to send. Perhaps, when the night shift came on—

She walked back to the car and, curling up in one corner of the seat, stared gloomily across the river. The minutes dragged by. Super tried to get out to make the acquaintance of an aggressive-looking terrier, and once a cat flashed by, seriously disturbing his serenity. Tevis spoke to him sharply, and then resumed her contemplation of space.

It began to look like rain. The river darkened, and there was a mutter of thunder. Tevis set her teeth. She hoped it would rain; she hoped that there would be a flood and that she'd get pneumonia. That's just how she felt.

But when the rain began to fall in torrents, she changed her mind. She got out and tried to put up the top, but couldn't find the pliers, and, anyway, the pieces didn't seem to go together right; and she hurt her fingers, and twisted her ankle on the cobbles in the

gutter. She was shivering, and the tears were running down her cheeks, when Super uttered a yelp, and Duncan came up.

"For Heaven's sake, go and stand in the doorway of that saloon until I get the top up and the tire fixed! You'll catch your death of cold!"

She obeyed without a word, and presently he came and helped her back into the car. He pushed Super to the floor, and started the engine. Then he turned and looked at Tevis.

"What's your trouble?" he inquired.

"I've had the most awful day!" Tevis wailed.

"Well," Duncan responded with cheerful philosophy, "into each life some rain must fall."

"You needn't tell me any of your old epigrams—or whatever that is!" Tevis flashed out. "I've had just about all I can stand!"

"Oh, be a sport. What's a flat tire? I telephoned to the garage to see if your car was in, and when they told me that you were stranded in the wilds of Jersey, I saw it was up to me."

"You could have done more by calling for your dog this morning, as I asked you to. He has just ruined my day! He has just ruined my whole life! Everything is his fault! First he spoiled my meeting with Bruce Buckingham, and I had to be so nice to him to make it up to him that he thought— Yes, and he spoiled that, too!" Tevis added stormily. "Bruce was just telling me—you know, what friends we were—and how he—"

"I get you," Duncan said, glancing down at her flushed face as she stammered uncertainly. "Go on. What else has Super done?"

"Now he's spoiled my chance of ever becoming famous!" And she detailed the scene at the studio for him. "I was just getting the idea, too, when he walked into the picture."

Duncan listened to the harrowing fin-

ish, when, I regret to state, he laughed rudely and at great length.

"Great Scott! Fancy Super cutting you out! That was one thing I never thought of when I left him——" He stopped and bit his lip.

"You left him!" Tevis stared accusingly at him. "You left him! You left him on purpose! You meant him to spoil things!"

"Well——" Duncan drove the car on the ferry and stopped the engine. "Well," he began again, "I'll tell you, Tevis. I wanted to see if old Super could play the game any better than I could."

Tevis said she didn't have an idea what he meant—quite the proper remark under the circumstances.

"Well, you know the answer, don't you? You know I'm crazy about you. Now," he finished hurriedly, "if you're going to turn me down, for Heaven's sake, get the agony over!"

Tevis considered, her mind and her heart in a turmoil. She felt that she must be fair to Duncan. She wanted to tell him—— Well, what did she want to tell him? She felt—— But it was impossible that what she felt was being in love! How could she love Duncan when only this morning she had felt that she loved somebody else, or, anyhow, that she might learn to love him. And, besides, it wasn't possible to love a person whom you had

often told yourself you hated. She attempted to explain this to Duncan.

"So you hated me." He seemed far from depressed. In fact, he slipped his arm about her and kissed her then and there, as if she had told him something that made him hilariously happy. "Why, you dear little goose, don't you know that hate is only love turned inside out? And you go right on hating me—occasionally. It'll make the other times all the sweeter. And when we're married——"

"But—but, Duncan, I haven't said I'd marry you——"

"My dear, you can't afford to let a chance like this slip. I own Super. Super is to become famous in the movies—you said so yourself. I'll present him to you as a wedding gift, and you can lead him to work on a royal-purple ribbon, and—who knows?—a bit of fame's mantle may fall upon you."

Presently a heavy hand rattled the curtains.

"Say—is your starter broke? There's a load of coal behind you waiting to get off the boat!"

Duncan looked out.

"'A dog is a man's best friend,'" he observed gravely, "and, believe me, that's no epigram, but the straight truth."

The driver went back to his horses.

"Crazy with the heat!" he declared, climbing to his lofty perch.



THE PICTURE

THE wind lies hidden in the grove of firs,
Peeping at times through new-leaved birchen boughs,
To where the lake on glistening canvas paints
The picture of the hillside at her vows.

In gown of green, arbutus at her breast,
And jeweled with the glancings of the sun,
The hillside lights the maple's torch of spring,
To tell the world love's year is now begun.

MARION HICKS DEXTER.



"Happiness. Ltd."

By F. E. Bailly

Author of "Her Feet Beneath Her Petticoat,"
"Yesterday's Roses," etc.

III.—Mid Pleasures and Palaces.

MIQUETTE," said Helen Vereker patiently, "how many times am I to tell you not to criticize visitors?"

She sat at the writing table of her pink-and-gray Bond Street consulting room, gowned in adorable black, lit from within by an indescribable eagerness, a charming expectation of romance, very refreshing in a blasé age. Her hair shone finer than silk spun for a queen's palace, and her eyes were brown pools lit by the sunshine of golden specks. Outside, an April storm lashed against the windowpanes, and the passing thought of violets, with little wet faces starring the Sussex lanes, parted her lips in delight and brought a faint wave of color into her cheeks.

Miquette, a perfectly beautiful flapper, garbed in the black pinafore of a French schoolgirl, short enough to reveal delicious black silk legs, pouted derisively.

"*Elle est bête comme je ne sais quoi!*" she exclaimed fiercely. "Her costume, her hat, her shoes—oh, shameful, madame! She has no head at all, *voyez-vous!* Never have I seen such a spectacle!"

"I expect she's a perfect dear, really," cooed Helen affectionately. "Bring her in, Miquette, and make tea immediately."

There entered Helen's room on the

heels of Miquette a young lady. Her age might have been twenty-three. She exhibited a dignified languor, enhanced by her height and a slight tendency to floppishness. Her costume recalled dim, elusive sales catalogues; a coat and skirt of violet cloth, plastered with braided bedevilments and semielliptic pockets, set off an overdone hat and shoes such as the nicest people see only in illustrations. One gained an impression of endless vanity bags, decorative umbrellas, strings of exotic beads, and what are known in the trade as "articles de Paris." Miquette placed a chair for the vision with a very bad grace and minced contemptuously into her little electric kitchen.

"Good afternoon," murmured Helen, sending forth a searching glance from beneath the blackest eyelashes in the world.

"It is a lovely day, is it not?" returned the visitor. "Showery now and again, but we must expect that, mustn't we? Ha! Ha!"

She laughed merrily, although the humor of her remark remained obscure.

"The streets are in a dreadful state," she went on. "I don't think it ought to be allowed, do you? We ladies get our shoes in such a mess."

"And how can I help you, please?" inquired Helen.

The visitor bridled a little. She liked, apparently, to take her time over a job. However, she fumbled girlishly in a complicated hand bag and produced a cutting from the *Morning Post*.

"Every one ought to be happy," she read in an entirely new voice. "If you are not happy, consult Happiness, Limited, 2000 Bond Street W. Hours 2-5, p. m. Tel. 2527 West."

"I am Miss Gladys Williams," she pursued. "I want to consult Happiness, Limited. Are you the lady manageress, or are you the lady manageress' young lady?"

Helen smiled internally.

"This is my show entirely, Miss Williams."

The visitor looked at her with furtive awe.

"Would it be expensive?" she queried subtly.

"There is no charge. If I can help you in any way, I suggest you send a subscription to a war charity. Apart from that——"

Miss Williams brightened swiftly.

"You see, my uncle, George Weatherbee—that would be mother's brother, the Nottingham one, you know—has just died and left me his fortune. It comes to as much as three hundred pounds a year. I was doing work of national interest, but I gave it up at once. What I wanted was to get into good society, among really nice ladies and gentlemen, you see—nothing common. I've always been naturally refined, Miss——"

"Vereker."

"Miss Vereker, and I shouldn't think of associating with common people now, as I tell Mr. Boaler. Mr. Boaler and I are engaged. He is doing work of national importance, too."

Helen sighed gratefully. She had feared the damsel might be in pursuit of an earl.

"And just how do you want me to help?" she murmured sympathetically.

"Why are you doing this?" asked Miss Williams suddenly. "It isn't anything for the papers, is it? Of course, I couldn't think of that." She was very much on her guard.

"My theory," explained Helen, "is that everybody is good, only no one knows it except me, and so people distrust one another and are miserable. I want to make them happy."

"Well, Miss Vereker, living in the country—as I did before I came here to do work of national interest—one gets a little rusty—not quite smart enough for town. I couldn't wear these clothes at home, for instance." She glanced coquettishly at her raiment. "I want to do the smart thing, you see—dine at good places like the Popular, and go to subscription dances, and so on. But they must be *exactly right*, you see. You see that, don't you?"

"And what about Mr. Boaler?"

Miss Williams simpered.

"Well, he's a little that way, too," she confessed. "He's so busy, he hasn't had much time for society. I want you to take him in hand as well."

Helen rose graciously, her heart lead within her.

"Please dine with me at the Lesbian Club, 2000 Piccadilly, to-morrow at seven-thirty, and bring Mr. Boaler," she said. "I'll think over the matter in the meantime."

Miss Williams also rose.

"Evening dress, of course?" she said, as one lady to another.

"I think so," breathed Helen, faintly dizzy. "Good afternoon, Miss Williams."

Or ever the visitor's feet were upon the stair, she had reached for the telephone and rung up Mr. Frankie Sheringham, a faithful friend invalided from the army.

"Frankie darling," she said, "do come at once! It's desperate this time. Heaven help me!"

"Very well," came the quiet voice over the wire, "I'll neglect all my editors and report in person. Never say die. In about half an hour? Good-by, Helen dear."

In due season he arrived, tall, blue-eyed, very calm. His glance fell on Helen like a benediction, for they were old comrades, and, besides, he loved her. Miquette fawned upon him, because he always treated her as some one grown up and desirable.

"What is the desperateness?" he asked, taking one of his own cigarettes. "Is it a frock gone wrong, or a tragic hat, or an enraged client? Why do you go on with this lunacy, little Helen? You're too nice to bother with casual strangers."

"Shush, Frankie! You don't believe every one is good. I do. But a simply fierce girl blew in this afternoon. I'm frightened."

She sketched briefly the exquisite Miss Williams. Frankie scowled darkly and yet more darkly.

"Anything but this, Helen," he said at last. "God knows I am your dog and the slave of your will, but not this, I beg you! She won't even be amusing. She's a tragedy."

Her brown eyes brooded over him, partly because she liked him, partly for his undoing. She put out a slender white hand and laid it on his arm.

"Please, Frankie!" she murmured.

"Very well." He smiled very affectionately at her. She was so charming, and her voice would have lured even young girls from girlhood's golden dreaming. "What am I to do?"

"Dine with us at the club to-morrow at seven-thirty. Oh, thank you, Frankie! You *are* a dear!"

"And perhaps you'll dine with me to-night and wear the gold frock, Helen? I'm only a foolish thing, but I do like you in it. Will you? It will be so nice."

"Yes, please," she said, and a dimple crept out at either corner of her mouth.

II.

Within the chaste precincts of the Lesbian Club, even there was the clay of Mr. Henry Boaler revealed to the haggard eyes of Helen and Frankie Sheringham. He loomed over the proceedings, a very tall, gaunt man with a lumpy, thin face and watery blue eyes. His dinner jacket confessed itself the work of one of those tailors who build a garment as they think it ought to be, and then impose it upon the unhappy client. Thus the line of Mr. Boaler's garment showed fair, but his bones stuck out in the wrong places.

"Mr. Boaler, Miss Vereker. Mr. Boaler, Mr. Sheringham, and vice versa!" exclaimed Miss Williams brightly, and lo, they knew one another!

"Henry has been dreadfully hard worked lately, owing to this dreadful war," she went on, unfolding her napkin as one long accustomed to these conveniences. "He's got quite out of the way of parties, haven't you, dear?"

"Bit rushed, what?" queried Frankie, in the manner of the army, of the male newcomer.

"Beg yours?" besought Mr. Boaler nervously.

"Busy?" amended Frankie.

"Ours is a very complicated process," sighed Mr. Boaler, looking earnestly at Helen. "Not only have we a dowel pin engaging a slot in a sleeved bushing, but there is also a train of gears from the cam-shaft to a driven member with a reduction of seven to one on the lay shaft pinion."

"It sounds awfully interesting," gasped Helen.

Mr. Boaler continued in this strain for a quarter of an hour, while his soup congealed. He seemed pathetically eager that his audience should really understand. Helen grew rigid with

agony. Frankie's eyes wandered from her little black frock to the tortured anguish of Miss Williams' cerise Jap silk creation.

"I'm sure it was your eyes that first made Boaler love you," he interrupted at last, to change the subject. "They're like shadowed pools with the sunlight upon them."

"Oh, go on, Mr. Sheringham!" tittered Miss Williams.

"Ahem! Ahem!" coughed Mr. Boaler, in watery annoyance.

"It must be lovely to be a man," cooed Helen at him, kicking Frankie silently under the table. "They have such interesting lives."

Mr. Boaler smiled at her with pitying condescension, and burst forth into a pæan of parallel windings, shunt windings, and compound windings. Frankie did not heed. He had achieved a revenge. He had got off with Miss Williams.

After the gay feast, Helen had coffee served in the smoking room. She found Mr. Boaler entirely on her hands. Miss Williams and Frankie, a little apart, conversed in low tones, punctuated by her ladylike giggles. Frankie was evidently in one of his worst moods. Helen caught him once in the act of telling his new friend's fortune by the lines of her hand, which he held gently, but firmly, never caring how Mr. Boaler darkened at the sight. Then that nationally important man turned to her and discoursed of high-tension magnets in tones that thrilled with new, revengeful passions.

At the hour of ten, Miss Williams rose regretfully.

"We've fixed up one or two things this week—a dinner and dance, a theater, and a reception at Lady Winterbotham's," explained Helen. "You must both of you come, please."

"Give me your program at dinner," murmured Frankie unblushingly to the

fair guest. "I want to be sure of at least seven dances."

"You are a one!" she giggled, enchanted.

"We shall be delighted," observed Mr. Boaler, with emphasis on the "we."

"Hurry, Henry," commanded his fiancée. "Remember my boarding house fines me a shilling if I'm out after eleven. Some one has to wait up to let me in."

A taxi bore them away. Frankie, terrible with fury, whirled Helen into another and fled to give her supper at the Piccadilly grill.

"I hope they fine her five shillings!" he stormed. "Another of these jam-borees will kill me, Helen, it will really! Anything worse than that long streak of misery in the made-up tie Providence never achieved! I believe the devil made him to torment us! And as for her——"

"You seemed to be very happy together, anyhow," jeered Helen. "And they're rather dears. So unspoilt. Of course her frock's a mistake, but I'll try and drop a hint."

"Better drop a bomb. It's quicker and more suitable."

"And I'm going to teach Henry to flirt quite nicely. Frankie, don't be cross. It gives you lines on your face."

The taxi stopped, and he led her to a table and commanded a bottle of sunshine. His gloomy eye wandered over Helen's slender charms, and was appeased. He stretched a hand across the table and laid it affectionately on hers.

"If you'll just love me a little and let me make the orchestra play 'Michigan,' I'll be good," he promised.

III.

In the fullness of many days, Frankie Sheringham found himself gazing into the eyes of Miss Gladys Williams across a bamboo table at the

Equatorial Tea Rooms, a coy spot, where the devoted may absorb the beverage à deux in a colorable imitation of a bathing tent. This formed part of her education.

Miss Williams' toilet, primed by the tactful suggestions of Helen, caused less acute anguish than hitherto. Her face had a floppy appeal of its own. At the moment, she languished for Frankie, preferring him even to Mr. Boaler.

"Well, Gwladys," hazarded Frankie, with an accent on the "Gw," "are you happy?"

"Yes, Mr. Sheringham—happier than I have any right to be," she replied, in the language of the "Knock-out Knock-out," her favorite literature. "Am I not promised to another?"

"Well, what difference does that make? You aren't compelled to have tea with him every day. Besides, it's cheaper for him if I take you out sometimes."

"Three hundred pounds a year is a nice little sum. The man I marry can afford to spend money on me," observed Miss Williams sententiously.

"You come to him on feet shod with gold, dear lady."

"Do I? I wonder. Sometimes I'm not quite sure. There are other gentlemen in the world besides Mr. Boaler." She looked at him with large, limpid eyes, and her unpowdered nose shone with earnestness.

"I've never met any one quite like him," confessed Frankie. "Beware how you cast him out. The unique, even when bizarre, has a charm of its own."

"I wish he was more like you," pursued Miss Williams. "You're such a gentleman, Mr. Sheringham."

"I may be, Miss Williams, but on the other hand Boaler is undoubtedly a toff. I can see him a mayor before he dies, and you will open foundation

stones and lay bazaars, or whatever you call it."

"Now you're laughing at me," said she sadly. "You're a terrible tease. I love being teased."

"Ah, naughty!" reproved her host, and so the game went on.

At the identical moment, in a gilded haunt whose splendor appalled him, whose tariff hurt his feelings, Mr. Boaler, his white slip starting out of his waistcoat with agony, wooed Helen.

"I am a plain man, Miss Vereker," he observed with proud humility, "but there have been Boalers in Goosegreen Parva churchyard for hundreds of years. And in spite of the excess-profits tax, I may say I'm a warm man—a warm man. After the war, we anticipate unparalleled demands."

Helen surveyed the plain, warm man innocently.

"I'm sure Miss Williams is very fortunate—though so are you, of course. You'll be very happy."

"Miss Williams is not the only young lady in the world," objected Mr. Boaler coldly. "Sometimes I wonder if she isn't a folly of youth. Possibly I could look further and do better."

"That's high treason, Mr. Boaler."

"I shall have a very smart car after the war."

"How sweet Miss Williams will look at the wheel! You must have the coach work to match her eyes," cooed Helen.

"I shall not, then," retorted Mr. Boaler, almost rudely.

Helen and Frankie, comparing notes over their afternoon, shook unanimous heads.

"We must get them married," asserted Helen. "They've had their fling. I think Lady Winterbotham was rather a triumph. They'll never forget it."

"They no longer wish to marry one another, Helen. She wants me, and he wants you. I never felt so nervous in my life."

Helen reflected. She was giving Frankie dinner at her flat in Queen Anne's Gate, and he never watched the firelight playing over her hair without breaking his heart.

"They'd better see each other's disgraceful behavior. Take Gladys to Romano's and sit downstairs, and I'll make him give me lunch in the gallery, where he can see you two flirting. Then the instinct of primitive man will be awakened, and he will desire nothing but to bind her to him by indis—whatever it is—bonds."

"You're as clever as a bagful of monkeys!" exclaimed Frankie admiringly, bending forward to ignite her cigarette.

So, indeed, it came about. In that temple of magnificent ghosts, the ill-assorted couple lunched, and Mr. Boaler leaned petrified over the railing of the gallery to observe the carryings-on of his betrothed. A thundercloud of wrath darkened his rather shallow brow.

"If you will excuse me this afternoon, we will cancel our tea party, Miss Vereker," he said. "I have an important call to make. By the way, there seems to be a terribly worldly atmosphere about this restaurant. In some respects, I am sorry we came."

"It's rather doggy, really," murmured Helen, struggling hysterically with a peach.

At the hour of five p. m., Mr. Boaler, having made an assignation by telephone, called upon Frankie in his Savoy Street rooms. The visitor found a very calm, well-groomed person working at an expansive table of black olive wood, amid surroundings which combined barbarism and extreme comfort.

"Sit down, my dear Boaler. There's the whisky, and here are cigarettes. What can I do for you?" began Frankie, laying aside his fountain pen and leaning back innocently in his chair.

Mr. Boaler came a pace nearer, and his look was ugly.

"You can leave my girl alone, you twopenny-ha'penny puppy!" he snarled. "Why, I could buy you up half a dozen times over!"

"But I'm not for sale," said Frankie gently. "I s'pose some one has been talking scandal about Gw—Miss Williams and myself. This is very distressing, Boaler. Exactly which—I mean, what—have you heard?"

"I saw you to-day at lunch in that disgraceful place! It cost me nearly two pounds, but it was worth it. I'm a plain man, Mr. Sheringham, and I say you were carrying on a flirtation with my fiancée in a public place!"

"And what were you doing with Miss Vereker? I've heard things about your behavior, Boaler, that would make Miss Williams' blood run cold. You seem to have hinted at marriage while you were engaged to another girl. What have you to say about that?"

"My God!" murmured Mr. Boaler, and a cold sweat broke out on his brow.

"Well?" insisted Frankie.

"Mr. Sheringham, I rely on you. My father and hers worked together. She and I were sweethearts ever since we could talk, practically. I remember I gave her my doughnut at the Sunday-school treat fifteen years ago come Lady Day. I've been a fool. This war turns people's heads. I'm in your hands, Mr. Sheringham."

"You'd better get married at once," said Frankie sternly. "I'll arrange it with Miss Vereker. Go and apologize to Miss Williams, and never, never behave so badly again."

"I—I could do with a whisky. Thanks. Not all that soda," gasped Mr. Boaler unhappily.

So it came about that a wedding took place very shortly, at St. Agnes', Endymion Square, S. W. There were two bridesmaids, Miquette and Helen. There was a best man, Mr. Timkin,

also nationally important, apparently Mr. Boaler's adjutant. Frankie, well qualified so to do, gave the bride away. Afterward a reception took place in Helen's flat, whither came many strange people, and the bride's and bridegroom's photographs appeared in *The Perfect Lady*, by kind arrangement of Frankie. The honeymoon occurred at Brighton, and there were numerous and costly presents.

Sitting on a cushion by the fire in

Frankie's room after dinner on the night of the ceremony, Helen stared reflectively into the flames, to the detriment of her eyesight.

"They were dears, really. Every one is good, Frankie, only you won't believe it."

"But you are better than others," he murmured, and his eyes caressed her until she turned her head, caught their glance, and laughed the happiest laugh in the world.



SOUVENIR DE TA TENDRESSE

TO you, dear one, I stretched my hand
 Across the pink spaghetti and the wine
 That graced Golotti's board, as we had planned,
 The day we lunched there with your friend and mine.
 We talked of art, and of our separate work,
 As those who loved to labor—and to shirk!

How well we laughed, at jest or none—
 Just for the laughter's own immortal sake!
 We all four liked each other, and the fun
 Ran very pleasantly, with give and take.
 We talked of love, I think, as those who knew
 The bitter-sweetness of what lovers do.

But those two friends who loved us well
 Stared when you took my pleading hand in yours.
 How should they know that which we could not tell?
 Or that you held it fast and led the talk because,
 Although we spoke of life with warm young breath,
 My heart was trembling at the thought of death.

NINA WILCOX PUTNAM.



Freedom

By Sandra Alexander

SPOTTISWOOD lay in the embrace of summer and sweltered in the afternoon sun. Dust was thick on the horse chestnuts in the courthouse square, dust was ankle deep in Main Street. Behind close-drawn shutters, Spottiswood napped its daily siesta.

A little way up deserted Main Street, the sun poured steadily down through dusty green blinds and fell in unabated fury upon a strip of faded carpet in a square and ugly room. A girl lay in the center of a four-poster bed and watched it. Brown hair tumbled the hot head. A palmleaf fan, held in a languid hand, stirred the lace on the bosom of her thin nightdress. It was breathlessly warm. Presently the aimless hand stopped, and the girl sat up.

"Oh, Lord!" she sighed passionately. "I wish I were dead! I wish I were dead," she repeated, "or—or a man!" Her voice, deeper than one had a right to expect, coming from so slim a throat, sounded echoing through the high-ceilinged room.

The faint tinkle of an amused laugh floated in through an open doorway.

"Why can't you go to sleep, child?"

"It's too hot to sleep! It's too hot to do anything!"

She slid down from the high old-fashioned bed, and her bare feet pattered into the next room.

"Where's Charlotte?" she said to the girl lying on the exact duplicate of the bed she had just left.

"I don't know. Let me alone. I was almost asleep."

The girl didn't answer. Instead, she climbed up on the bed and sat with her

chin resting on her humped-up knees, staring.

The other fidgeted a moment under the somber gaze.

"Don't! You give me the creeps! What is the matter with you this afternoon, anyway?"

"I'm sick of it!"

The older girl began to laugh, but, sensing the depth of feeling back of the worn phrase, she stopped.

"It is pretty rotten," she said and rolled over where she couldn't see the little figure.

"I'm sick of everything!" the deep voice went on. "I'm sick of being a girl! I'm sick of being one of three girls! I'm sick of not having money! I hate not being allowed to do things, I hate this old house, I hate this town—everything in it—" The voice quivered and broke.

"But why all this hymn of hate?"

"It didn't used to be so bad before the war. There was something doing—a little something, at any rate. Look at it now! Just look at it! I've been there at the window an hour, and not a soul has passed except niggers. Elizabeth, how do you stand it?"

"I do very well, my dear. When I was your age, I rebelled, too, just as you're doing, but I got over it. There were some men in those days, my little Adamless Eve. You'll have to content yourself with the Red Cross."

"Oh, it isn't that! Why won't he let us—"

"For the very good reason that he can't afford it."

"We could work anywhere else but here."

"Oh, could we?"

"We could learn. Everybody is working now. Every paper I pick up is full of the wonderful things they're doing. Why can't we?"

Elizabeth laughed again.

"Charlotte might hire out as a cook, but what could we do? And then—the female of the Cheshires working for her living! Can you picture him?"

"No—he won't let us work. He kept Charlotte here, and look at her now! And then he broke you. Why, you're both dead and don't know it! But I won't stand it, I tell you—I won't!"

"You might marry."

"I might if there was anything left to marry. There isn't a man in this town who isn't in the cradle or his dotage. There isn't a man in our family, either. Do you ever think of that?"

"Yes."

"That's the reason father hates us so. Why aren't we men, Elizabeth, you and Charlotte and I? I'd have been in France long ago. Nothing but girls—the last of the Cheshires—girls!" She fairly spat it out. "I tell you I'm not going to stand it much longer! I—"

"Not going to stand what, Avis?" Charlotte's cool voice, cool and sweet as her white linen frock, caught up the quivering girl, as she came into the room.

Avis made no reply. She glared down at Elizabeth as if daring her to tell.

"What is it you are not going to stand?" Charlotte repeated.

"Oh, Avis is just bewailing her fate." Elizabeth threw herself into the breach. "No men—no dances—nothing but interminable miles of gauze and casualty lists full of people she doesn't know."

"But, honey, they've gone in such a good cause. Surely you're willing to give up your amusements for a while."

"Oh, yes." Avis managed a little smile. "I suppose so."

"Isn't it time you girls got up?" Charlotte turned in the doorway. "He has an attack of indigestion again. You'll have to make some gruel for his tea, Elizabeth."

"Where's Iry?"

"I let her off to go to her grandmother's funeral."

"That's the second grandmother she's buried since Christmas," said Avis pettishly.

"People usually have two, dear." Charlotte went out.

Avis got to her feet.

"That was pretty decent of you, Betty," she said.

"Charlotte has enough to worry her. She went through it all with me."

"But I'm going to do something, Betty."

"Yes, that's what I said, too, at the time—and here I am."

For a while there was no sound in the two rooms, except water poured in basins, the slam of a bureau drawer, and the quick patter of high-heeled shoes back and forth. Then Avis' voice:

"Come here a moment, Betty."

Elizabeth came through the door, hooking up her yellow frock.

"What is it?"

"Who is that?"

She joined Avis at the window. The two peered out between the broad slats of the blind. Across the street a man in a soldier's uniform had stopped in front of the courthouse and was stooping to decipher the legend on the new monument. His back was toward them.

"I can't see. Wait until he turns around."

Having finished his inspection, the man straightened up and faced toward them. He took off his felt campaigner's hat and with his handkerchief wiped

the sweat from the band. He did it deliberately and very carefully.

"I don't know—— Why, yes, I do. It's that Mallory boy! How he has changed!"

"What Mallory boy? Oh, you don't mean——"

"Yes, I do—Grant Mallory," Elizabeth laughed. "You ought to remember him, Avis. He picked you up out of the mud in front of the drug store that day you would ride Henry Gurganus' bicycle. I'll never forget how furious you were."

"Oh."

"How big he is! He was nothing but a boy when he went away."

"There was some trouble, wasn't there?"

"Some? Why, don't you remember, he was in trouble all the time—he and that river gang? He always had a black eye. I shouldn't think he'd ever want to come back. They practically ran him out of town."

"I do remember him now." Avis turned away from the window. "I'm going over to speak to him."

"You are not!"

"Watch me. He's enlisted, and he's come back. I always liked people who came back—and I'm going over and speak to him."

A few moments later and there floated down the broad steps of the Cheshire house, down the brick path between the hedges of box bush, a vision of pink girlhood. The man, still standing across the street, watched her coming, and as it became apparent that she was crossing to speak to him, he removed his hat. He did not, however, advance one step to meet her. Avis faltered for the fraction of a second. There was no hint of a smile, no change in the face that watched her. She stopped before him.

"How do you do?" she said, in her deep, pleasant voice, holding out her

hand. "You've probably forgotten me. I'm Avis' Cheshire."

Still the man did not speak, but the little hand was lost in the clasp of his big one.

"You—you picked me up once, you know—out of the mud." She smiled up at him. "I don't believe I ever thanked you. You see, I was so young then. You're Grant Mallory, aren't you?" she finished almost breathlessly, for still he had not spoken.

"I remember you well," he said, relinquishing the little hand. "Yes, I'm Grant Mallory."

"I thought so. I saw you from my window, and I just came over——"

"It's very good of you."

"Isn't it warm here? Won't you come and sit in our swing?"

Without waiting for a reply, she led the way back across the street. The man paused only for an instant and then followed the little figure through the iron gate and under the thick lilac bushes to the wooden swing. He helped her in and, cramping his long legs, sat down on the seat opposite.

Avis glanced at him and then quickly away again. He was still looking gravely at her. Some sudden impulse had prompted her to come out and welcome back to Spottiswood the boy who had left town years ago in disgrace. She had done it chiefly because he wore his country's uniform. He didn't seem grateful; in fact, he hardly seemed interested. And why did he stare at her with such a disconcerting gaze? She began to be sorry she had yielded to that impulse. But, after all, what did it matter? He was nothing but Grant Mallory, town rowdy, grown up and come back, and wasn't she Avis Cheshire, bent upon being nice to him because he was going to fight the Hun? What was there to be embarrassed about?

"You're in uniform," she said presently, for want of something better to

say, and to break the silence that was fast becoming threatening.

"Yes." The man's voice was grave. It matched his steady eyes and clean-cut chin. It was a nice voice, Avis thought.

"And those emblems on your sleeve mean that you're an officer, don't they?"

He smiled.

"A sort of an officer—a sergeant."

"How splendid!" Avis tried to show proper enthusiasm. He didn't answer.

"Please talk! You're making me feel so—so—"

"I'm sorry." He spoke quickly enough that time. "I was thinking what a really fine thing it was for you to come across and speak to me. What shall I talk about?"

"About yourself. What are you doing in Spottiswood? I can't imagine any one's coming back after leaving it."

"No? I can very well—when one left it as I did."

Avis had the grace to blush.

"I didn't mean that."

"Of course you didn't. I beg your pardon. I've been in training since March. I had an unexpected furlough and decided to come and look at Spottiswood."

"So you remembered it."

"I shall never forget it," he said simply.

Avis, watching him, was fascinated at the way his mouth closed and his jaw squared.

"A fighting mouth," she told herself. "No wonder Spottiswood feared him."

"You sail soon, then?"

"Yes, I have every reason to believe we go in a few days."

"What a wonderful thing it is to be a man—to be able to go—to fight! Oh, I wish I were a man!" Some of the passion of the afternoon welled up in her voice, and unconsciously she clenched her hands in the rose-pink lap. "You're laughing at me," she added defensively. "You've heard other girls

say those same words—but I—I mean it!"

"I'm not laughing, and I've never heard any other girl say it just as you say it. I believe you mean it."

"Thank you."

"Why do you want to be a man?"

"Because I'd be free then."

"Free?"

"Yes, free to come and go as I pleased, to do as I pleased. You can't understand—" She broke off suddenly. "What an idiot you must think me, unburdening myself to a stranger! But then we aren't exactly strangers, are we?"

"No, we aren't strangers."

Elizabeth called from the porch:

"Avis, oh, Avis!"

"That's Betty calling me. I'm sorry I can't ask you to tea, but Iry—that's our cook—went off to a funeral. When do you go away—when do you leave Spottiswood?"

"At noon to-morrow."

"I'm sorry. I wanted to talk to you. Would you come back—to-night?" Avis asked hurriedly. "Just come right in and sit here in the swing."

The man looked at her gravely.

"It's very good of you, Miss Cheshire," he said slowly, "to take pity on my loneliness. I'll be glad to come."

Avis stood up. Some reflection of the stately graciousness that was hers by heritage was in her manner as she held out her hand again.

"You're mistaken. It's I who am lonely. We won't say good-by, then."

"No, we won't say good-by yet," he repeated, and held the hand for an instant.

In the long, dark dining room, Charlotte hovered over the gleaming old mahogany table, giving the finishing touches to the simple meal, the candle-light shining on her graying hair and reflecting in the blue of her eyes, eyes that were much like Avis' own.

At one end of the table was a thin

dish of delicately sliced ham, near it a plate of homebaked bread. There were two kinds of preserves, and honey in a little silver bowl. At the other end, in front of Colonel Cheshire's plate, was a huge dish of steaming cornmeal gruel.

"Call Avis again, Elizabeth."

The door leading from the library opened, and Colonel Cheshire came into the room.

"Devilish hot this afternoon," he said in his high, querulous voice. "Where are the girls? Can't they come to their meals on time? Always dawdling about somewhere! Avis down the street, isn't she? Can't you keep her busy, Charlotte?" Without waiting for Charlotte's reply, he picked up a spoon and poked it into the gruel, testing its consistency. "Who made this stuff? Devilish thin! It seems to me, as long as it is the only thing I can eat, that some of you girls might learn to make it! I can't eat this truck!" He pushed it away.

Elizabeth came in from the kitchen.

"I made it, father. What's the matter with it?"

"Humph! I thought so. Can't eat it, simply can't eat it! It's no good. What are you doing, standing over me like that? Sit down! Sit down, I tell you! Where's Avis?"

"Here she is, dear. Try a small piece of this ham. It's cut so thin, I'm sure it won't hurt you."

"Oh, there you are, miss, always the last one to come in! Sit down—sit down, can't you?"

He bowed his head as Avis, her cheeks strangely glowing, slipped into her chair beside him. After the mumbled grace, the four ate in silence. Colonel Cheshire had always possessed the art of dampening conversation at meal time.

Elizabeth watched Avis. She was such a strangely alive Avis. Had the Mallory man been rude to her? It was

a very fine thing Avis had done, she reflected, to go out and welcome that man back to Spottiswood. The child had the spirit that somehow both she and Charlotte had lacked. It was a pity that she shouldn't have her chance—somewhere. Elizabeth sighed unconsciously.

"Which end of the smokehouse did you get this ham from, Charlotte?"

"The end next to the walnut tree, dear."

The colonel threw down his knife and fork with a clatter.

"I knew it! I knew it! It's green through! Didn't I tell you to use up the hams at the other end first?"

"So we are. Don't you remember, we switched them around to make room for the new ones? This is a four-year-old."

"Humph!"

Avis cleared her throat.

"Father," she said, fixing her eyes on him.

"Don't jump at me like that! What do you want?"

He glared at her from under shaggy brows. He knew she was afraid of him, and it was his greatest delight to foster this timidity.

She faltered now.

"I——"

"Can't you talk? What is it?"

"I want to go away from Spottiswood—to do something—to work——"

"So that's it! By the Lord Harry, always something with you, first one thing and then something else—never satisfied! Who's been putting notions into your head?"

"Nobody."

"Haven't you got a home? What more do you want? Want to go away and work, do you? Well, you can work here. Help Charlotte and stay in off the street, do you hear me? There's plenty you can do."

"But I don't want that kind of work,

sir. I want to earn something—to see the world——”

“To see the world!” Colonel Cheshire banged his fist down on the table; all the dishes jumped. He choked and got to his feet. “You just let me hear another word from you—just another word! By God, I can’t be left to eat my meals in peace for some whining chit! I won’t have it!” He towered over her. “You go to your room, miss, and you stay there until I send you word to come down!”

Avis, deadly white, her red lips clenched in a thin, straight line, folded her napkin and rose to her feet.

Upstairs, she flung herself down on the bed and pressed her hands to her hot head.

“Charlotte says drink this milk.” Elizabeth pushed open the door and came into the room. Avis took the glass obediently. “What made you do it?” Elizabeth went on.

“I couldn’t help it. I didn’t intend to. It must have been Grant Mallory.”

“What do you mean?”

“I don’t know,” Avis said slowly.

“What is he like, Avis?”

“Like nothing in Spottiswood! Listen, Betty—he’s coming back later. I hardly had a chance to speak to him. Will you tell Charlotte I’ve gone to bed—not to disturb me?”

“I don’t——”

“Oh, Betty, I thought I could count on you!”

“You can, but don’t stay out late—promise.”

“We’ll be there in the swing. You can call me.”

Later, she slipped, a flying little shadow, through the dark hallway and down the steps.

The man came to meet her. They did not speak until they were settled once more in the swing. Avis’ breath was coming in short, quick jerks, and she was making desperate effort to control it. He sensed her distress.

“Has anything happened?”

“Yes.”

“I hope it wasn’t——”

“No, you had nothing to do with it. It’s something entirely different.” She stopped for a moment and swung in silence. “Would you believe me, Mr. Mallory, if I told you that I’ve just been sent away from the table, like—like a child in disgrace, and told to go to my room and stay there? I—I have. And I ran away to come down here to you.” She gave a little laugh that was almost a sob. “You’re going across soon to fight for freedom, aren’t you? Doesn’t it strike you as being just a bit funny that some of us here on this side have so little? I’ve been thinking about you, up there in my room, while I was waiting. My father—— You remember him, don’t you?”

“Yes.”

Avis did not stop to unravel the mystery of that one word so shortly spoken. She hurried on.

“My father sent me upstairs because I asked him to let me go away, to learn to do something—to work. He told me never to speak of it again.”

The man made a quick movement as if to interrupt her.

“No, let me finish. You don’t know all about us, even if you have lived in Spottiswood, because there are some things even Spottiswood people don’t know. He made an old woman of Charlotte. Charlotte was never a girl; she’s been like this ever since she was a baby. He’s leaned on her. It’s as if he were an infant and she his nurse. She bears all his burdens. Charlotte never had a chance to live her own life—never!”

She wet her lips and hurried on.

“Then there’s Elizabeth. I expect you know Elizabeth’s story. Everybody in Spottiswood does. She planned to run away and get married, but he found it out somehow. He locked her in her room until he broke her spirit.

Elizabeth stayed in her room three months, until she promised to give Arthur up. He was a traveling salesman. Surely you heard when you lived here?"

"Yes, I heard."

"And now she doesn't care any more. She's bitter. She says things that make my heart ache. Are you wondering why I'm telling you? I never talked to any one like this before. I'll explain in a minute. It came to me in a flash while I was waiting up there in my room. There is me. I'm the youngest, you know. I went off to school one year and then I came home. I've been here ever since, except for a trip or two to Richmond. At first I didn't care. There were so many of the boys and girls, and we managed to have a good time. They've all gone now. All that could left Spottiswood. The war took the rest. Some of the girls are nurses in canteens, the older ones, and some went away to take up secretarial work and got positions. It isn't that I miss them or the good times. It's just that I'm sick of doing nothing. I eat and sleep and walk downtown. I've tried Red Cross work; it doesn't help. Charlotte doesn't want me bothering with the housekeeping. There's nothing for me to do—here." Avis spread her hands in a little gesture. "Nothing!" she repeated.

"I'm sorry."

"I felt that you would be. Somehow I know that Spottiswood didn't give you your chance, either. I looked at you this afternoon and thought how much alike we were—you, when you went away, and me—me now."

"Oh, no!" the man said quickly.

"Yes. But you've made the most of your chance. You went away and did something—succeeded. I don't know how I know it, but it's true. I could see it written all over you, and I wondered—would you—would you give me mine—my chance?"

"I, Miss Cheshire? What do you mean?"

"Just this." Avis pressed a trembling hand over her heart. Surely he must hear, it was beating so loudly.

"Are you married?"

"No, but——"

"Is there any one—— Do you belong to any girl?"

"No."

"Then—then will you marry me?" she said simply.

The man leaned forward and took both fluttering hands within his own firm clasp.

"You're overwrought. Your father is crazy to treat you as a child. There must be some way I could help—some way besides that."

"There's no other way. I've thought it all out. You take me away——"

"But I go to-morrow, and the day after I must be in camp."

"I know. That's just it. I have some money—a little—and all I want is that you should take me away with you. Then, if we were married, he couldn't come for me—bring me home again. I can work. It won't take me long to learn. All I want is your name and—to be free!"

"No, I can't do that."

"Don't say that—please! You're going away. It'll be a long time before you come back."

"I may never come back."

"There's a chance of that, but it only makes it safer. We wouldn't be harming any one. I could still see Charlotte and Elizabeth, and I—I don't believe I'd be afraid of him then. I'm sure of it!"

"Let me think. You're so young, you know so little——"

"That isn't fair!"

"No, it isn't. I beg your pardon."

"Don't think—do it! I'll be on the train. And in Richmond, it's simple really. I'll leave Charlotte a note. After we are—married, you can leave

me. I'll come back here and pack up and find a place—something to do."

She stood up and stretched her slim arms to the sky.

"Think of it!" she breathed. "I'll be free—free! And I've never been for one little minute! Say you will—please!"

The throaty voice urged, and she swayed toward him in the soft-scented darkness. He put out a hand and steadied her.

"I will. If I can give you your chance, you shall have it, and please God you shall never regret it!"

Avis hardly heard the end.

"I'm glad." She was trembling violently; her teeth chattered against each other. "I'm glad," she repeated. "I'll be on the train to-morrow. Now I think I'll have to run, I feel so—so—Good night." She touched him swiftly on the shoulder and fled.

Grant stood for a moment where she had left him. He found a cigar and lighted it. Then he moved slowly out from the shade of the scented lilacs, down the brick path of the old garden, between the box-bush hedge, and out of the Cheshire gate.

The only luggage Avis carried with her was contained in the depths of her big knitting bag, and she sat on the ugly red plush seat and knitted furiously on a soldier's sweater. She did not glance up as the car filled. She was conscious of the entrance of a few town people, all of whom she knew well. One or two stopped and spoke to her. To all she gave the same answer. She was going up for some shopping. With eyes still bent on her work, she sensed rather than saw Grant Mallory walk down the aisle toward her. Her heart skipped a beat. Would he speak? She held her breath.

He passed her without word or sign, went the length of the car. Then he was back with a bag which he stored

in a rack across the aisle. He settled himself in the seat opposite and pulled out a newspaper. Avis' spirits gave a quick leap.

With a sudden nerve-racking jolt, the train started. Avis looked out of the window at the ugly old station, at the weeds beside the track. She was leaving it all.

"Good-by!" she whispered.

Richmond came all too soon. Now they were in the huge, dirty station. Avis lingered in her seat until the car was empty. She crammed the knitting back in its bag and got up. Then she went out and stood in the door of the waiting room. Here he found her.

"Come," he said in a matter-of-fact sort of voice. "I have a taxi waiting."

And without a word, she followed him.

Settled inside, he turned and looked at her.

"You aren't regretting?" he asked, still in the matter-of-fact voice.

"No, I'm not regretting," and she smiled.

In a very short time, or so it seemed to Avis, the license was procured, and an old white-haired justice of the peace had mumbled something over them, and they were man and wife.

She wanted to laugh. Was this all there was to it? How simple! She had been silly to have had the slightest doubt that anything could interfere with her plan. She dimpled deliciously. What a joke! She was married. Then she stole a glance at Grant's grave face. Her own sobered. Suppose she had upset some of his plans. She probably had. Well, that couldn't be helped now.

As they came from the courthouse, lights flashed on up and down Broad Street. It was very lovely—those long strings of glowing beads. And then, all of a sudden, she was very tired and hungry.

"Could we eat?" she asked timidly. "You must have a room first, and then we'll have dinner."

Avis watched him register—"Mr. and Mrs. Grant Mallory, Spottiswood, Virginia." How strange, she thought. Why Spottiswood? They were shown a huge room, perfectly appointed even down to the little rosy bedside lamp. The boy who had brought Grant's bag put it down and left them.

"Will half an hour be long enough for you? I'll come for you then."

"Yes, plenty. I'll be ready." She locked the door behind him.

Quickly taking off her clothes, she turned on the water in the huge white tub and slipped in.

She was deep in the mystery of doing her hair when his knock sounded on the door. She ran across and opened it and then came back and tried to make her trembling fingers complete their task. He did not look at her. She pinned on the little hat and gathered up the gloves and knitting bag.

"I'm ready."

Downstairs, across from him at the little table, she took one quickly appraising look. He was freshly shaven; he had found soap and water, too. Avis knew very little about uniforms, but this did not look like the issue stuff in which the town boys had come home. It was of finest cloth, and it fitted him across the shoulders as if it had been made for him, instead of wished on him. And there was something in his manner, too, that made him quite different from the town boys. It was an ease that even the best of them lacked, an assurance that singled him out from even the well-dressed men in the room around them. He was a mystery. And of a sudden she felt that she wanted to know all about him—where he had been, what he had done in those years in which he had been away from Spottiswood.

He recalled her.

"Shall I order?"

"Please do."

But when the dinner came, Avis had lost her appetite. She could do nothing but sit and watch him—and wonder.

"Would you care to go to a show, or are you too tired?"

"No, I should like to go."

The lights and the music, the quickly changing vaudeville bill intoxicated her. Once she laughed aloud gleefully, and when people turned and looked, shrank back against Grant's arm in confusion.

When it was all over, she was tired again. Now, if he would only go, she'd be perfectly all right. But he took the key from the desk clerk and stood aside for her to enter the elevator. He was coming up!

He closed the door and locked it. Avis looked around her. There was his bag at the foot of the bed. Why, of course he was there. Hadn't he every right? She remembered the register downstairs—"Mr. and Mrs. Grant Mallory, Spottiswood, Virginia." She felt rather ill.

She walked over to the mirror and took off her hat. She stared at herself in the glass, her fingers busy in her hair. How white she was! And what a little fool, what an ignorant little fool she had been! She was frightened, dreadfully frightened. She steadied herself against the edge of the dresser. What could she do? Charlotte seemed very far away. Should she tell him she expected him to go? How did one say such things? What words did one use? It was freedom she had wanted. Did she expect it would come to her as a gift? Then the more fool she! She turned and looked at him.

He stood in the center of the room, one hand holding an unlighted cigar. He was watching her. Unconsciously her head went up. She felt that back of those gray eyes he must know what she was thinking, he must know that

she was frightened. Perhaps he was even amused.

Avis came of fighting stock, stock that had always played fair. Her head went even higher, and with a white, white face and all her girlhood peering out of her eyes, she smiled. It was a brave smile.

"You're very tired," he said gently, coming toward her, "and I'm going to say good night. We can talk in the morning."

All the blood in her body seemed to flow into Avis' telltale face.

"Good night."

They shook hands gravely. Only when he had gone did she remember the bag at the foot of the bed. Had he forgotten it?

Worn out, she slept on and on. The sun was pouring in at the windows when the shrill jingle of a telephone bell woke her. It was Grant's voice.

"Were you asleep?"

"Oh, yes." She laughed. "But I'll be down in a jiffy."

"Don't hurry. I'll wait in the lobby."

Avis sang as she splashed in the cold water and hurried over her dressing. Eyes shining and face rosy, she looked at herself in the mirror. What a child she had been last night! All imagination, every bit of it. How good he was! Oh, well, perhaps she was destined to be a fool always. But now—it was a joy to be young and alive and to be starting out on life's adventure.

They had breakfast, and when it was finished, he sent her back upstairs to the room. In a few minutes, he joined her there. Leaning over her, he took her left hand in his own and separated the little third finger from the others. Then he felt in the pocket of his blouse and drew forth a thin band of gold.

"Oh!" she gasped, as the little circle slipped into place. "It only needed

that!" She held the hand off to admire it.

Grant sank down in one of the chairs. "Now, tell me," he said, "what it is that you want to do."

Avis folded her hands primly in her lap, the one with the shiny circle on top, and looked at him.

"I expect to go home this afternoon and tell them. Then I shall pack and come back here and find work."

"What sort of work?"

"Most any sort." She was a little vague. "They want people to work."

"Yes, skilled labor. What can you do?"

"I can learn to do anything," she said defensively.

"I'm sure you can in time."

"It doesn't matter. You're not to worry. That wasn't part of the bargain. You're to go right on wherever it is you have to go. You're not to give me a thought."

"But," Grant said slowly, "suppose I want to—worry, as you call it?"

"You mustn't."

"Yes, I think I will." And he stood up and leaned on the window sill, looking down at her. "We have so little time in which to talk—just an hour now. And there's so much to be said."

"An hour?" said Avis. "Only an hour?" A queer little feeling that could hardly be given a name tugged at her heart.

"Do you remember saying that I had had my chance and had made a success somewhere?"

She nodded.

"It's true. I did go away and succeed. You shall see. But it's never tasted to me like success. In Spottiswood, yesterday and the day before, I found out what it is that I've lacked. 'A prophet is not without honor save in his own country,' you know. I know that what I must do to make it a true success is to go back to Spottiswood and live it there—to that sleepy, snob-

bish, utterly unfair old town, to live it there. Do you know what I mean, Avis?"

"Yes, I think so."

"I mean that no matter what I did elsewhere, no matter how much of a success I made away from there, there's still the feeling that I ran away instead of staying and fighting. And so it would be with you, Avis."

"But you can't mean that I should go back?"

He bent his head.

"Yes, just that."

Avis moved her hands in protest.

"No!" she said passionately. "I won't! How can you, after——"

"I'm only telling you my story to help you see it. I shan't urge you. You shall do just as you wish, as you first planned." He moved over to the bag and unlocked it. "These are for you," he said after a moment's search, and he put into her lap a package of papers, tied with thin red tape. "Here is the record of my success, as you choose to call it. And here"—he took from his pocket a thin sheet of paper and placed it on top—"here is what I should like you to do with it. There's plenty of money. You can do anything you wish."

"For me?" Avis stammered.

"Yes, you are my wife."

"But——"

"There's no one else."

"I can't! I can't, Grant!" She stumbled a little over the unaccustomed name.

"Yes, it's yours—your freedom."

"But how can I—I— Why, I'm almost a stranger. I have no right——"

In her anxiety to explain just what it was she did mean, she rose from her chair and held the papers out to him, fairly pushed them back into his hands. He took the bundle and dropped it on the floor.

"No, we are not strangers. You don't know how well I remember pick-

ing you up the day you fell in front of the drug store. I can see you now. You were all in white, and you came down the street on that bicycle. You were laughing. You'd just learned to ride it and were afraid of it. As you got in front of me, the wheel struck some rubbish, and down you came almost at my feet, a little crumbled heap. I picked you up. Do you remember what it was you said to me?"

"No. I was a horrid little thing!"

"You said, 'Put me down. I'm quite all right!'"

"I told you I was horrid."

"It wasn't that. It was your pluck. You were frightened. You didn't want me to pick you up, and all the loafers hanging about were laughing at us. You brushed out your short white skirts and mounted the bicycle again. Then you went off. It was wobbly, but you rode it."

"I had forgotten."

"I hadn't. The memory of it has been with me ever since. That was the reason I did as you asked me to do. Then last night——"

"Last night?"

"Yes, you were frightened again. Did you think I didn't see it? It was that same pluck that made you turn and smile at me."

"Oh."

"And I want you to have your chance, Avis. You shall do just as you wish. Only, you must let me help make it a little easier for you. It'll be hard enough as it is."

Avis put out both hands impulsively.

"You've been so good, Grant, so thoughtful! Thanks seems such a pitiful, small thing for so much." She hesitated an instant, and the velvety voice shook. "What poor, barren words they are—'kind' and 'good!' I never realized it before. If you weren't going away, we could be friends, couldn't we?"

Grant looked down at the hands clasp-

ing his. He drew his away and covered hers instead.

"No, Avis, we could never be friends. I would stay and," he said slowly, "and make you love me." He drew her into the circle of his arms and tightened them. "I would kiss you—kiss you——" He put one hand under her chin and lifted the little head. The clean-cut lips lay on her own and held them in a long embrace.

Suddenly Avis' heart, that numb, quiet little heart which had never stirred before, came to life and beat maddeningly through her whole body. It sang and throbbed to her finger tips, and her lips gave him back kiss for kiss.

After a long time he released her and put her gently into the chair. Then he went down on his knees beside it.

"Oh, Avis, my little love!"

Avis' eyes were closed.

"What have you done to me, Grant?" she whispered.

"My—little—white—girl——" The words came in broken breaths.

Her hands went out blindly and drew his close-cropped head to her breast.

"You mustn't leave me now! You can't go, Grant!"

He raised his head.

"Go—I had forgotten!"

"You'll get out of it somehow?"

"Get out? What do you mean?"

"Grant, you can't leave me now! Say you won't!"

"I must."

"No!" Avis cried. She flung herself against him and held him tight. "No—you can't!"

He caught her close.

"I must. I'll have to go soon now. But listen, Avis—I'm coming back to you! Do you understand, dear? *I'm coming back to you!*"

Only stifled sobs answered him—such

heavy, strange sobs coming from that slim throat. It seemed they must tear it.

"Don't, dear! It's only for a little while." He knelt once more and put his lips in the hollow of her neck. "As sure as there is a God in heaven, I will come back to you!" His voice was muffled.

"What is it you want me to do, Grant? Tell me. I will do it, dear. Tell me."

"I want you to go back home—to Charlotte and Betty and your father, dear, to stay there and wait. There'll be things for you to do there—to work for me—to wait——"

"Work—and wait! And I wanted so to be free! Oh, Grant, I'm bound more than ever now!"

"Yes, dear."

"Are women never free? It's their love that binds them. It's sweet, but, oh, it hurts! I'll go, Grant. I'll go and work and—wait for you. Nothing matters but that! How long before you——"

"Now," he said. "I must go now. Smile, Avis, smile as you did when you came across the street and spoke to me in the courthouse square. Smile as you did last night, my little brave girl wife." His voice broke, and he hid his face against her.

"I will, dear. Look up at me. See—I'm smiling. Kiss me once more. Tell me you're coming back."

"I'm coming back to you—my wife. Nothing can harm me now."

"Then we won't say good-by yet."

"We'll say good-by—never!"

"Never."

"Give me your lips, Avis—my love."

The door closed, and Avis lay as he had left her in the huge chair, her hands clenched.

"Oh, God!" she cried. "I wanted to be free—free!"



A Tragedy in Cambric

By Richardson Wright

Author of "The Open Door," etc.



IT was by far the cleverest remark that the clever Mrs. Brenton had made, although at the time she was not aware of it, nor did she dream of its consequences.

Those to whom it was addressed were her friends and neighbors of over six months' standing—and one may say things to friends after six months. Besides, they knew her well enough to expect her to say just that sort of thing and the things she did say about those other young matrons of Possum Hollow Road who were not present.

Pleasant things? Oh, yes, extremely pleasant. For Mrs. Brenton sedulously avoided behind-your-back criticism, although at times she had been guilty of invidious comparisons. But she had made no comparisons thus far, and the group that sat knitting on the shady porch of the country club warmed up to her as never before.

They discussed—casually, of course, and without arriving at any conclusions—Mrs. Halstead-Jones' theory of child education, the latest peace offensive, the current and soaring prices of wool, butter, and meat, the Melville trolley accident, and sundry commercial rumors related by their husbands, and had at last reached that inevitable termination of all feminine gossip—clothes.

No matter how dangerous the way of feminine conversation, how beset with social pitfalls, how morally straight

or conventionally narrow, it can lead to but one inn of mutual interest. And the four young matrons had at last crossed that threshold; in fact, they were well within doors. They were discussing lingerie.

Mrs. Gerard, the longest married of them, candidly confessed that she made her own, and gave as her excuse economy, durability, and the fact that "one enjoys the things one makes oneself." None of them attempted to controvert this statement, even when expressed so impersonally.

Mrs. Tommie Hamilton, after a pause, averred a weakness for French convent-made articles—outrageously expensive and plainer than virtue, but a preference she had acquired through having had her trousseau made especially for her in a convent at Quebec. As this event had not been three years past, Mrs. Tommie Hamilton's extravagance could scarcely, as yet, be called a vice.

Molly Ferris—the young, recently acquired, and socially established spouse of James Ferris, of cotton-corner fame—confided her sole devotion to handkerchief linen and Valenciennes. That her husband could well afford this both she and the others knew, and her statement was, therefore, in the manner of a boast. She even went so far as to name the shop whence all these costly garments came. This, in any circle of

women, is a distinct challenge, and it would have been taken up forthwith had the shop she named not been the recognized emporium of the ultra, the most individual, and the most expensive. Neither Mrs. Gerard nor Mrs. Hamilton made an effort to take up the gauntlet. They were older than Mrs. Ferris by a couple of years and had been married longer. They made allowances for her age—it was only twenty-eight—and the shortness of her married suburban experience—four months in all—and let it go at that.

But Lilian Brenton did neither. She merely compared the confidences of the other three and then remarked, without so much as glancing up from her needles:

"Well, so far as my lingerie is concerned, I could be in a train wreck and I wouldn't be ashamed of it."

Further than that she said nothing, and the conversation hung in midair for a moment and then abruptly changed to the war.

But the exasperating part of it was that Mrs. Brenton had gone into no details. She had not stated her preference in design, material, cut, or trimming. She had given no inkling as to favorite shop or couturier. Cold, bald, unadorned—so far as her lingerie was concerned, she could be in a train wreck and she would not be ashamed of it. That was all.

Yet, as they later went their separate ways, it began to dawn on the three that Lilian Brenton had tossed off quite a characteristic Brentonian bon mot. Naturally, before the night was gone, they had repeated it to their husbands, and Lilian Brenton's reputation as a wit gained several cubits. Not that Gerard or Hamilton or Ferris gossiped about it between themselves, but, by an inexplicable telepathy, all three arrived at a name that Charlie Brenton's wife was forthwith to bear. In those three houses along Possum Hollow

Road, in the most intimate of conversations, Mrs. Charles Brenton was thereafter called "Lingerie Lily."

II.

Possum Hollow Road is one of those delightful restricted districts that have come to grace the suburbs of our American cities. It is a long, tree-shaded boulevard leading from the fringe of town up to the country club on the hill. The houses stand well back from the road, separated from each other and from the street by broad lawns. Each house has its own individual architecture and gardens, since they are the homes of a moderately well-off younger set, and not a few were erected as wedding presents by indulgent parents who could afford to pay the fees of fashionable and discerning architects.

The Brenton house, which stands between the Gerard Italian stucco villa and the Hamilton Dutch-colonial cottage, is a half-timber house of genuine workmanship. That is, it is real half timber, with real brick nogging, rows of leaded casement windows, a tiled portico, rough eave beams with gargoyle terminals, and a roof of heavy variegated slate. Behind it is laid out a little formal garden inclosed by a high brick wall.

The architecture has successfully come through the walls, and both the background of the rooms on the first floor and their furnishings preserve the early-English atmosphere so obviously established by the half timber without.

In the living room, with a fine sense for the fitness of things, is combined the uncomfortably antique and the comfortably modern. Before the fireplace ranges a deep, upholstered davenport in peacock blue, with an ancient oak refectory table backed to it. Old yellow Capri vases transformed into lamps with stiff vellum shades stand at either end, leaving space in the center for

writing paraphernalia and a row of magazines laid out in orderly array. To one side of the davenport, a crude old Jacobean stool serves to hold smoking things. Another stands conveniently on the hearth, with a stiff-backed black oaken settle behind it. The fireplace, in the manner of the period, has no mantel, merely a broad, hand-adzed beam let into the rough plaster of the chimney breast.

At the moment Lilian Brenton was writing at the table, while her husband stood with his back to the fire watching her. He was munching candy from the open box on the hearth stool, and seemed impatient for her to finish.

"Candy?" he suggested.

"No, thank you."

"Given it up?"

"No, merely considering my figure—how it grows." She bent again to her writing. "It toils not, neither does it thin."

He smiled at the parody, but would not permit himself the indulgence of a reply.

He was a trifle heavy, was Charles Brenton, a man of the middle thirties, well born and conventionally cultivated, who considered himself, his business, and his standing in the community matters not to be trifled with. As the head of a household, as the head of a downtown brokerage office, and as one of the directors of the exclusive Possum Hollow Country Club, he stood well. He also dressed the part—immaculately, quietly, and in the latest mode. But although he spoke the part, it was an effort for him to think up to his standing. Not that he didn't "belong" mentally, but he had ambitions, and he knew that the higher in life you go, the more complex become its problems. Hence he studiously avoided any social digressions that would imperil his standing. At the moment, he was confronted with what he considered a peril, and he waited for his wife to fin-

ish so that he could introduce the topic diplomatically.

Lilian at last flourished her name across the bottom of the page, addressed the envelope, sealed and stamped it, and laid the letter aside.

"Now, I'm ready for candy," she announced.

"I thought you weren't——"

"Only exercising a woman's prerogative, my dear," she broke in.

"Haven't you any will power?"

"Yes, but I can't lay my hands on it just at this moment."

He gave her the box without comment. Her flippancy jarred on him, and for several moments he did not speak.

"By the way, Lilian," he finally began—and she knew from his tone that something serious was at hand—"what were you saying at the club the other day that should cause talk?"

She glanced up at him nonplused.

"Because people are talking about you," he added.

"Really?"

"Yes, and—and I don't like it." He helped himself to a cigarette and looked down at her across the table. "I might just as well tell you. Coming up in the train to-night, I sat behind Jimmie Ferris and Frank Gerard. They evidently did not know I was there. Your name was mentioned, and they went into gales of laughter. Now tell me, why should they act that way? Have you done anything, said anything? Is there——"

She took another chocolate.

"I don't know that I did. I only talked to Mrs. Ferris and Mrs. Gerard and Mrs. Hamilton, and, goodness knows, women can talk about things, can't they?"

"Certainly, but what did you talk about?" Brenton straightened up. "It's this way—you and I have a nice home here and we have a place in the community. Our future is what we

make it. Don't let's get talked about. Why, I couldn't believe my ears when I heard my wife being referred to as 'Lingerie Lily.'"

"Oh, yes, I know." She suddenly recollected. "We were talking about lingerie, and I said——"

"Yes? What did you say?"

"I said that so far as my lingerie was concerned, I could be in a train wreck and I wouldn't be ashamed of it."

"But why did you say that?"

"Because there isn't the slightest chance of my being in a train wreck."

"But don't you think——"

"No. I'm not going to think," she answered quickly. "I'll stand by what I have said."

"Lilian, you're getting stubborn, headstrong." Brenton's tone was huffy, but it brought no reply. He stared at her, and then changed his tactics.

"Why in thunder should you talk about such a subject? Isn't there enough going on, with this war and every man being drafted, for you women not to have to talk about your underwear?"

"The war has nothing to do with it." She shrugged and looked into the fire again. "It's the difference between the sexes, between men and women, between you and me. You men lie to each other about your golf scores, don't you? Well, we women lie about our lingerie. You men can't prove the other fellow's fibbing. We women daren't."

"But where does the train wreck come in?"

"Stupid! After you've been married a year, you may understand. Women fear a show-down worse than they fear Judgment Day."

"And so you women judge each other by your——"

"Yes, my dear, we do."

The conversation after that was strained.

III.

In many respects, Brenton was right. His wife's bon mot might easily be exaggerated into an indiscretion, and he knew that the tendency of repetition was to exaggerate rather than minimize. She was given to tossing off these cleverly satirical remarks, and Possum Hollow Road was beginning to expect them from her. Before long she would know that they expected them, and her simplicity would degenerate into the self-consciousness of the professional community wag.

He was also right in saying that she was stubborn and headstrong. For this he was not to blame. Lilian Sanger had been brought up since babyhood by a maiden aunt, sister of her father, who had come to manage the household when the young Mrs. Sanger died. She was a New England spinster, with rock-ribbed ideas of conventionality and a horror of the vanities to which so many of the young girls in Lilian's set were addicted. Consequently, the girl had had a rather gray childhood and had been held closely in bounds. She had married young because marriage opened a door to wider and freer fields. Once loosed from restraint, she tugged violently at the reins, as if she must make up for twenty-four years of repression in the first six months of marriage, a fact that Brenton learned soon after their honeymoon.

During the past few months, he had read occasional storm signals. Of late they had come closer together, and, so far as he could see, the situation must eventually resolve itself into either his running her or her running him.

While Brenton was worrying himself about these matters, Lilian blithely went her way. She had plenty of money, she managed her house with a minimum of trouble, and she was blessed with an excellent dressmaker and an ever-widening circle of friends. At the same

time, she was aware of her husband's restraining hand. Whenever he was strict with her, she warned him of bulldozing. His criticism of her remarks at the country club especially rankled. She thought of it for a long time that night, and the next morning at breakfast spoke her mind.

"You may talk to men that way, but you can't talk to me," she flung at him over the cups.

"I wanted to be frank about it," he replied calmly.

"Women dislike frankness," she answered. "No woman wants to be told the whole truth about herself."

"Then you'd rather have me tell you half truths?"

She shrugged.

"Because if our married life is to be based on half truth, then it's all wrong, and we must straighten it out."

"Do you thank the person who tells you the whole truth about yourself—the whole, naked, nasty truth?"

"Well——"

"No, you don't," she pursued. "There isn't a man or woman living who does. There isn't a man or wife living happily together but that they leave half the truth unspoken."

Brenton turned his attention to buttering a slice of toast.

"I say this," she concluded, "because I know what I'm speaking about. Women know these things better than men. You ragged me last night because of what I said about lingerie at the club and because two men laughed about it. You thought they were laughing at you and you were afraid of my ruining your reputation. There's a whole truth for you."

"Please, dear, let's drop the subject."

But Lilian Brenton was insistent on the final word.

"If our married life is to be based on whole truths, I've given you a sample of them. I don't think it or any marriage can be. Remember," she

added ominously, "we haven't been married a year yet. Heaven only knows if we're going to get through it."

Which was an exaggeration, pure and simple. She knew it was and thought the circumstances warranted exaggeration, but the maid who overheard part of the conversation from her vantage point in the pantry interpreted it otherwise. She reported to Mrs. Ferris' cook that Mrs. Brenton had told her husband that they couldn't possibly get through the first year of married life. By the time this gossip reached the fronts of the houses, Possum Hollow Road was whispering under its breath that the Brenton separation was imminent. And the fact that Mrs. Brenton had not been seen at the country club in a fortnight, and that Brenton was playing his worst golf in months, seemed to substantiate the rumor.

These rumors, in time, had their effect on the Brentons themselves. In a subtle manner that is difficult to explain, they seemed to sense that Possum Hollow Road expected trouble of them, and they held each other in covert distrust.

That was the way matters stood when the time approached for the final match between the Possum Hollow golfers and the members of the Colesville club. This match very much affected the Brentons and what Possum Hollow Road was saying about them, because the wives of the players were going along to Colesville, and Charlie Brenton had sufficiently recovered his stroke to win a place on the Possum Hollow team.

As Mrs. Ferris said to herself: "The question now is—will she go along?"

Which was promptly answered when Mrs. Brenton announced that she was going along, and suggested their all motoring to Colesville, since the run was only ninety miles.

"We could all get into two cars,"

she said to the group on the club porch where she had finally appeared. "The men could ride in Tommie Hamilton's limousine and we four girls in our touring car."

They demurred for a moment.

"Of course," she added casually, "if we can stand the hardship of being separated from the dears that long."

Whereupon certain members of the younger Possum Hollow set didn't quite know what they thought about the Brenton affair.

IV.

As it has been since the beginning of time, the women were late. For half an hour the men champed up and down the drive, and finally announced that they would go on ahead.

"There!" exclaimed Lilian to the three who were in her boudoir putting on final touches. "I can get my powder on straight."

"Is your bag packed?" asked Mrs. Hamilton, who was crowding a scent bottle into hers.

"Packed last night, my dear."

"How many gowns did you take?"

Mrs. Gerard spoke from the floor, where she was tugging at a refractory spat strap.

"One," mumbled Lilian. Her mouth was full of hat pins at the moment.

A snicker came from Molly Ferris, who stood in the doorway watching operations.

"I suppose you've taken that lingerie you aren't ashamed of."

"Um, um." Lilian pushed in the last pin angrily, but quickly recovered herself. "There! I'm ready all but my veil."

The veil was finally tied and tucked in. Each took one last sweeping glance at herself in the mirror, and, a few moments later, with bags safely stowed in the front seat by the chauffeur, they started off.

It had been arranged that they were

to stop at the Bonnie Rose for luncheon, then take their time to Colesville, so that they would reach there for the dinner party.

"I hope it isn't going to be stiff," Lilian remarked as they struck the open road. "As it is, I feel as if I were representing the visiting firemen at some sort of smoke-eaters' congress. The only thing we lack is badges."

But by the time the car had gone a few miles, they concluded that everything would be pleasant and that Colesville wouldn't try to put on airs or flash its diamonds.

Before them lay the open road, and a very good road at that—tree-shadowed for many miles of the way with maples and oaks that were just tinting in the autumn air. They shot past the gates of large estates and by the meticulously whitewashed fences of gentlemen farmers' farms, dipping finally into a hollow where the road took a tortuous course to avoid heavily bowlderred banks.

As they were busily chatting, they did not notice that the chauffeur was swearing angrily, as chauffeurs do at the least perceptible noise about a car, and it was not until they were going down a sudden decline that they heard the rattling.

"Anything the matter?" Mrs. Brenton called.

"Just a little knocking," the chauffeur replied. "I'll have a look at it."

They came to the bottom, and the car shot ahead. The knocking was louder. In a great arc, the road turned to round a big shoulder of rock and slid on to a flat stretch through the middle of which ran the tracks of the main line to New York. The car took it gracefully, swung down to the stretch, and started across the tracks. With a sudden bang that threw the four women forward, it came to a dead halt.

"Hurry! We're on the tracks!" shouted Mrs. Brenton.

Instinctively all four jumped up. Mrs. Hamilton swung open the door and stepped down. Mrs. Gerard started to follow her.

At that moment came the blast of a train whistle, and a locomotive thundered round the bend.

With one leap, Mrs. Ferris was over the side of the tonneau. Lilian Brenton jumped behind her, struck the ground on her heels, pitched forward, picked herself up, started to run—and then everything went black.

"Thank God, no one was killed!"

Lilian Brenton fell back against her husband's shoulder and closed her eyes.

"Not even a scratch," he said softly, stroking her head. "It was a miracle if there ever was one."

A woman appeared in the doorway. She was the wife of the farmer who had carried Lilian from the road, where she had fallen, up to his house.

"I thought this here tea might make her feel better," she said.

"Oh, thanks awfully much." Brenton slipped Lilian against the back of the couch and took the cup. "Drink this, dear."

Like an obedient child, she drank it, and as she drank, strength came back to her. Finally she set the cup down.

"I don't suppose there was much left of the car," she said weakly.

"Matchwood, that's all."

"And the bags? Were they all smashed up?"

"I guess most of them were."

"That's too bad." She thought a moment, then looked up smiling. "And I suppose my—my lingerie was scattered over half the road."

"I'm afraid it was," he answered. "Mrs. Ferris gathered most of it up and——"

"No! Did she?" A look of horror came over Lilian's face. "And Mrs. Ferris wears nothing but handkerchief

linen and Valenciennes! I always knew——"

What she was going to say was interrupted by the appearance of the farmer's wife again in the doorway.

"My man thought you'd like your bag. He's just found it in the field." She set the overnight case on the table and went out.

Brenton thanked her and brought it over to Lilian, who took it on her lap.

"If these are ruined," he said consolingly, "we can get new ones."

"Not new ones like these, though," she replied, tugging at the locks. "Because I should certainly hate the idea of Mrs. Ferris picking up my things again."

"I wouldn't bother my head about that now," he said.

"You would if you were me," she said, tugging at the lock again. "You never knew."

"Knew what?"

How ashamed I was of my lingerie."

The buckles still refused to move.

"You see, Aunt Emma made me get all those heavy, starched, stiff cambric things with their everlasting scallops. Ugh! How I hate them! But she had a New England conscience, and it was the only sort she would let me have for my trousseau. I had to wear them out, because we mustn't waste in war time. Oh, hang those locks! When they got to boasting up at the club about their lingerie, I didn't dare tell the truth."

"Here, let me take that." Brenton slid the case onto his knees.

"You know I told you," she babbled on, "a woman hates a show-down worse than Judgment Day—and I've had mine. I only said that I could be in a train wreck because I thought they would never find out—Mrs. Ferris especially."

"Oh, I understand now," he said. And with a strong twist, he forced back the locks. The lid sprang up.

"Yes, I guess they're ruined," Lilian remarked, pulling at the edge of a torn and mud-streaked cambric nightgown. "Look at this old thing. It's enough to make any decent woman tell a lie. Look at that embroidery and that! Why, this isn't mine!"

She pulled the nightgown out full length. It tumbled in a crumpled mass across her lap.

"M. A. F.," she read the embroidered initials on the sleeve. "That belongs to Mrs. Ferris, who said she wore only—— Why, the little liar!"

Brenton exploded in a shout of indecorous laughter.

"A double show-down!" he gasped. "Now perhaps you women will find a less frivolous subject for gossip at the country club."



SPRING IN EUROPE

TOO green the hills! And a gold mist of flowers
 Clings softly to them like a bridal veil.
 There is new music through the warm spring hours,
 As when the last year's lover told his tale.
 The bee pipes drone, flies wanton in the sun,
 And every tree crotch holds its straw or twig.
 Maids go unwooded, sly animals are won,
 Cattle and ewes in pasture waxen big.
 Beneath the grass, the soft, wind-tousled grass,
 A lazar house, a whited sepulcher!
 Long lines of ghostly shades noiselessly pass,
 With gaping wounds, blind holes where love lights were.
 See! Where the violets are most plentiful,
 Peeps out the rust-brown temple of a skull.

CARLYLE F. MACINTYRE.



The Price of Wings

By May Edginton

Author of "Angels,"

"The Woman Who Broke the Rule," etc.



CHAPTER XIV.

WHAT?" Yarde shouted.

Then he met old Loughlan's eyes, screwed up and glinting with disdain between the wrinkled lids. The colonel remained impassive; Farway looked closely from one to another.

It was the girl who had the situation in hand.

"I gave Captain Grenfell the emeralds," she reiterated.

Grenfell came close to her and stood beside her instinctively. It was as if they stood there defying the world, he for her and she for him.

Old Loughlan turned blandly.

"There, gentlemen!"

His challenge did not include Edgar Yarde, and the manufacturer, smarting under the cut of the omission, cried:

"On the face of it, you can see that's not true! She's lying to save him! You can have the whole story pat from me if you'll listen. You don't want to listen—I know that. Here it is, though. I had reason to think Captain Grenfell visited my place at Havering too much and at unorthodox hours. I set a watch. A servant—a truthful girl—is prepared to swear he was coming away from the house, via my wife's window, at one o'clock in the morning, such and such a date. I tax my wife and Captain Grenfell with it. He tells me my wife was asleep and knew nothing of his visit——"

"Very properly, sir, he told you that," old Loughlan broke out.

"I'm not through, sir. You let me finish, I say. He tells me he came to steal her emerald necklace, which he sold to further his own schemes. Now, gentlemen, listen to me, and you'll see reason. I knew that to be a lie. Why? *She was wearing her emeralds at the moment he pitched the story!* Then she chips in, catching at what he said to save 'em both. She declares a necklace was stolen—Miss Allegra's necklace, which was in Mrs. Yarde's keeping for a short while. Captain Grenfell sticks to his story. Now in comes Miss Allegra and says she gave Captain Grenfell her necklace voluntarily and with her own hands. Now where's his story, and is he a thief or a liar or both?"

"We are not concerned with the question further, sir," replied old Loughlan. "This lady has spoken."

"That won't do for me," said Yarde roughly. "What have you to say, colonel?"

"Naturally," said Bent, looking the man through, "I accept Miss Allegra's version with pleasure. And while I think, Grenfell, that you were all kinds of an ass to invent on the spur of the moment such a beastly tale against yourself——"

"Let me finish," said the general. "It does your sense of chivalry credit, my

boy, and I dessay you hadn't much time to concoct a better lie." Here his eye twinkled, but he kept a stern and straight face.

"This won't do!" Yarde cried again.

"As far as I am concerned, sir, it does perfectly," replied Bent.

"This lady's patriotism——" began Loughlan, indicating Dorothy Allegra in a courtly manner.

Yarde's rough chuckle interrupted.

"I like this lady's patriotism!" His look finished the implication fully.

"Miss Allegra," said Bent, "shall we say good night to our hostess? And may I see you home?"

"No! No!" bristled old Loughlan. "Give me the pleasure, my dear."

"My privilege, please," said Grenfell, speaking for the first time since Dorothy's announcement.

"I'll bet it is!" cried Yarde, with another laugh.

"General——" murmured Dorothy Allegra, with a little gasp.

"All right, Dorothy," said Grenfell, very quietly.

"Run along, my dear," said old Loughlan.

"Farway," Yarde appealed, "you're a man of fair judgment——"

"Exactly," said the journalist, moving with the crowd, "and so I don't see, my dear Yarde, why I should have been called upon to listen to the private and personal affairs of these good people."

"You going my way, sir?" old Loughlan asked, turning to him with approval.

Grenfell took Dorothy's elbow and led her out. The corridor was empty. He looked into her eyes.

"My darling!" he whispered.

Then the drawing-room door flung open, and there stood Fulvia with a tragic face.

The general was heading a procession of three from the dining room. He was equal to most occasions, and so, taking possession of Fulvia before she could

utter a word, he ushered her back into the drawing-room.

"Bent," he said over his shoulder. The colonel responded promptly. "If you will tell this dear lady," said the general, patting her arm with twinkling eyes, "a little of what has occurred, I will see the young people—I will just see the young people——"

He reached Dorothy's side, as she stood silent in Fulvia's rich-colored corridor. Farway was at the other end, taking it all in attentively. Yarde, through the open dining-room door, could be seen seated again at his table, pouring more port into his glass with a shaking hand.

"My dear girl," said old Loughlan, "you've been splendid. I voice the admiration of Bent and myself, and, I am sure, of the newspaper gentleman. He seems not a bad fellow. I am sorry to think, my dear, that you should have sat at that cad's table and listened to—— Dear me, it's awfully distressing! I'm so sorry. So's Bent. So, I dessay, is Mr.—Mr. Farway. But it's all over. Stick to your guns, my child, and then it's all over. I shouldn't let this fellow off very lightly, if I were you. Put him through it." And he looked toward Grenfell, who had found the girl's wrap, and, smiling, he shook his head, very quiet and wise.

Grenfell unfolded the wrap. Without a sign of softening, the girl held herself cold as ice. The old man watched, shaking his head, slightly and wisely smiling. When she was wrapped up, she looked at him.

"Good night, general. I'd rather you drove me home, please."

"No, my dear," said he.

She turned and swung away.

"Grenfell," he murmured, keeping the impatient young man back, "make your peace, my boy. It'll take a bit of doing. But good luck to you."

He closed the door upon them.

They went down in the lift without

speaking. The porter found a taxicab. They were in it. Grenfell took the girl into his arms.

"Dorothy, you darling!" he whispered, and swiftly and triumphantly kissed her.

She struggled against him, but he was so triumphant that he could think of nothing but the revelation that had been vouchsafed.

"Sweetheart, I'm ever so penitent. Let me come back to the flat and tell you. But first please tell me—you love me?"

"No."

"You must, dear. What you did for me to-night——"

"Any girl with a grain of sporting instinct would have done it. Let me go."

"Dorothy, be as angry as you like——"

"I am angry without your permission, Captain Grenfell. Let me go!"

"Listen. I've been pretty low down, perhaps——"

"You have."

"I said 'perhaps.' I'd do it all again—what I've done—for the same cause. You've saved me to-night, and you can't think so badly of me——"

"I can and do."

"Dorothy, I didn't know it was your necklace."

"Does that make it better? Oh, God, why couldn't you have asked me? I'd have sold all I had to build the Grenfell."

"You would? You darling! But, Dorothy, I didn't know you had anything so valuable."

"Would you have asked me, had you known?"

"No, sweetheart, I shouldn't."

"You wouldn't!"

"I couldn't have asked you, my dear."

"Yet you asked——"

"I loved you, and I didn't love her."

"What difference does that make?"

"All the difference, my sweetheart."

"Don't call me that, Captain Grenfell. You haven't the right."

"You're going to give it me, Dorothy?"

"Never in this world!"

"Dorothy, I'm on my knees to you. I'm humbling myself to you as I've never humbled myself to any one else on earth, friend or foe."

"I despise you, you see."

"That I do not see. What you did for me to-night——"

"I did it for my country, to which you seem to be of use."

"I don't think I will believe that entirely, Dorothy."

"Your beliefs are your own affair, and nothing to me. As for me, I am my own."

"Are you angry I didn't keep our appointment on Christmas night? If it's that—well, I couldn't. When I knew what I'd done, I felt all to pieces."

"What is the difference between Mrs. Yarde and me, then?"

"If you really want to know, I'll tell you. But it's crude."

"I—I—don't want to know. I don't care."

"Yet you asked."

"I believe you are simply a beast, Captain Grenfell."

"You believe nothing of the kind. You know in your heart exactly why I took that infernal woman's emeralds—as I thought. And I only borrowed them. I returned them with interest—to the wrong woman. I've pretty well emptied my bank account to do it. Never mind that, though. What's money? But listen, Dorothy. Be human. Understand. When I stood there and saw all her luxuries—clothes hanging about, worth hundreds, I suppose, and trinkets thrown on the dressing table, and masses of silk pillows, by God——"

"Where were you when you saw all that, Captain Grenfell?"

"I was saying good night to the lady

at her bedroom window, Dorothy Allegra. And now you've got it!"

"Then that man to-night——"

"No, he was wrong. I will swear it to you, and there's nothing more sacred to me than you. I will tell you more. Yarde knows he's wrong. He's furious—that's all—and a cad is bad when he's angry. He ought to know his wife. He's quite aware, when he simmers down to think it over, that he has no case. One supposition of a hired spy is nothing in the eyes of the law. It was just those emeralds—the ones I sent her at Christmas—that finally got him. And, after all, they were yours!"

"Don't dare to say so!"

"They are yours! You are going to have them."

"No."

"Yes. And when they're accounted for, the larger part of Yarde's grievances will disappear. You see he'd looked upon 'em as a debt of love, not a debt of honor."

"Don't trouble to tell me any more."

"Why not?"

"It's ugly. That's how I see it."

"Very well, Dorothy. Let me tell you all beautiful things—things about yourself."

"I'll hear nothing."

"You're not condemning me for a flirtation in which she—— Oh, well, never mind that."

"I simply want to ignore you, Captain Grenfell."

"That you will never succeed in doing. You told that lie for me to-night."

"And it's over, as the general said. The lie shall stand. And they can all think you hesitated to say I gave you the necklace from your sense of chivalry." She laughed. "Your sense of chivalry is to account for the whole tangle."

"Don't laugh like that, Dorothy."

"Please, why not?"

"You'll send me rather mad, my dear.

You see, I've swallowed a good deal, and more of it—from you——"

"Very well, I won't be mean," she said in a little voice. "I am sorry."

"Will you be sorry for me, please?"

"No, Captain Grenfell. You've got all you wanted."

"Have I! Oh, Dorothy, do love me!"

Dorothy put her hands over her face and sat very still.

"For God's sake," she whispered, "don't worry me any more!"

"Give in, then."

"Never! Never!"

"Look at me and tell me you loathe me."

"Will you leave me alone then?"

"I imagine so."

She looked him in the face supremely. "Not only do I loathe you, Captain Grenfell, but I just *burn* with contempt for you!"

There was a complete silence in the taxicab.

"Is that enough?" said Dorothy at last, again in a little voice.

"Yes—enough—for the present, I think. Yes, good enough."

He left her before the block of flats, saying good night upon the curb. She tried to look into his face, failed, and fled within.

The next day, again in khaki, she was returning to camp.

Fulvia sat over the ashes of her drawing-room fire, and Edgar had not come in. Loughlan had departed with Bent, and she had made nothing of their masked faces. They had told her—just what men of their breed might choose to tell a woman in such conditions. And at last she got up and went to look for Edgar, who was still seated at the dinner table, drinking spasmodically and sullenly.

"Edgar!" she said in the manner of timid daring with which she would have played such a part on the stage.

The man scarcely looked up, but he

smiled unpleasantly. Fulvia walked forward and sat down near him. She propped her elbows on the table, leaned her chin on them, and looked out into space. Her attitude had in it both defiance and fatalism, and by and by, when Edgar Yarde glanced at her, he felt a pang of reluctance, of passion and alarm. She looked rather like a woman—she had once played a part something like this, which had suited her down to the ground—who throws up all, says: "Very well—I go."

He cleared his throat.

She did not speak. She had brought disdainful waiting to a high art. He shifted in his chair; she remained silent, staring before her. It seemed to him, now looking at her openly, that he saw thoughts reflected in her face—thoughts in which he had no right of entry. He felt as if she were saying farewell. He leaned forward; his eyes began to burn anxiously; his fury had evaporated; he began to feel a little as if he were a precious fool. She had the power of suggesting it without word or movement.

He laid his hand on her wrist and clasped it.

"Fulvia," he said, too anxiously, "let's—let's reckon up."

"The reckoning is done, Edgar," said Fulvia concisely, "and you may pay."

"I? How about you?"

"Do you think a woman like me really cares to stay with a brute like you?" she asked, leading trumps.

"Fulvia, look here!" said Yarde in a hoarse voice. "Be kind. I may have been a fool—in a way—but I've been misled—and I was more'n half justified—more'n half. I stick to that. And all this story—I can't piece it out even now. I'm willing to be reasonable——"

"How kind!" replied the woman disdainfully.

"Fulvia——"

"You've humiliated me. You've

dared to make a beastly scene here—at home!"

"I'm sorry if—— But look here! Oh, look here, I say! Who was telling the truth?"

"Certainly not Dorothy Allegra."

"Eh?"

"She was lying to cover him, of course, you fool. But that's between themselves, isn't it? Let it alone."

"Eh?" said Edgar, groping about dully. "Why, yes. Their business, of course. I don't want to spoil sport. Let that rest. But the other part of the business—— By God, who was telling the truth? Who was lying? Tell me that, and if—if you can make things out, you shall have me on my knees to you, Fulvia!"

"The truth," said Fulvia, who had run it all over in her mind while she sat over the embers, "is what you heard from Captain Grenfell himself. He stole the necklace; he thought it was mine; he returned it with interest as soon as he had money to spare. If he'd failed, he'd have been a thief. As it is, he's only a successful gambler. I am returning the necklace to him at once. It belongs to that girl. She bluffed us—we all knew it—but Colonel Bent and the darling general—they took her word like gentlemen and dismissed the whole affair. That's what *you* ought to do. It's over. A gentleman wouldn't look further. And now I tell you"—she pulled herself away from him, rose, and struck her fist down on the table—"that I'm weary of the business. This is the last word I'll say. Every syllable I've spoken has been by act of grace." She had him now, and she knew it. "You've had no right to the smallest mercy. Don't you see I'm sick of you? *I'm—sick—of—you!*"

Yarde seemed to fall forward from his chair to his knees, and laid his face against her gown.

"Fulvia," he muttered, "forgive me!

Take me back! I won't question. If you knew what you make me suffer, you—you'd understand a little——"

He was bowed so that he could not see the poignant relief sweep over her face. She looked down at the man on his knees. She had had him there before.

CHAPTER XV.

Grenfell had the emeralds by messenger very early the next morning, and a note accompanied them, written by Yarde, prompted by Fulvia in the flush of victory:

DEAR CAPTAIN GRENFELL: My wife returns these, as they should really be the property of Miss Allegra, she thinks.

I regret the misconceptions which have arisen.

Grenfell thought to himself:

"Poor beggar! The tale he's been told is like a jig-saw puzzle, and he daren't try to put it together for fear of what it'll make. Women *are*——"

He had not slept and felt stale and jaded.

He closed the necklace into its case again with his card, went out and bought flowers, sought a messenger office. This was how it was that Dorothy received jewels and bouquet at the little flat before it was time for her to pack her kit and return to Havering.

She knew the handwriting on the packet. She kept the messenger a moment, while she ordered the confusion in her mind; then, without opening the parcel, she pressed it and the flowers back upon him with a brief instruction and closed the door.

This was how it was that Stretton Grenfell, smoking in the lounge of his hotel, received back his gifts an hour after he had dispatched them.

The emeralds he kept. The flowers he handed to the first chambermaid he met on his way to his room. There he sat down—for he must be alone—and wrote to Dorothy.

Very well. Perhaps it's a different kind of bouquet you would like, war girl.

I'll get one for you.

Good-by. I'm going back. There's nothing to wait for. S. G.

The messenger went back once more with this, and Grenfell walked out of his hotel with the feeling of a bankrupt.

He went first to look for Bent, and ran him to earth finally in his club.

"Hello, Grenfell!" said the colonel.

"Good day, sir," said the young airman.

"Sit down and have a drink. You're looking——"

"I'm going back to-day," said the young man irrelevantly.

"How's that, my boy? Leave's not up."

"Fun is."

"Ah, well," said Bent. "Sometimes leave has no value at all. There are conditions which make it a wash-out."

"Exactly, sir."

"I thought, perhaps——" said Bent.

"No, sir."

"May all come right, you know, Grenfell."

"I suppose so, sir."

"Is there anything I can do?"

"Thanks, no. About what happened last night——"

"Best forgotten, Grenfell. As far as I am concerned, a complete refutation was made."

"The refutation was just—an act of generosity——"

"I have nothing to do with that, Grenfell. A very pretty act indeed, anyway."

"I thought so, sir."

"Must have—bucked you considerably——"

"At the time, yes, sir."

"It's all your own business of course, my boy. And hers. Nothing to do with any one else—that's how I look at it."

"It involved other people, of course, sir."

"Ah, yes," said Bent vaguely. "Mrs. Yarde—lovely woman—with a propensity for mischief, my boy. None the worse for that, though. Is there likely to be further trouble there?"

"None, sir."

"All's well that ends well."

"It's not ended yet."

"May all come right yet, you know," prophesied the cheerful soldier once more.

"I looked in to say good-by, sir."

"Ah, I'm glad you did. Good-by, Grenfell, and good luck. The best of luck to you, my boy."

Grenfell went to find old Loughlan, and he was sitting in the window of one of his two clubs, looking out into St. James'.

Old Loughlan said: "Just going to lunch. You'll stay?"

And at table, when lunch was ordered, he asked:

"How's life, my boy? Any news?"

"None, except that I'm going back to-day, sir."

"Ha!" said old Loughlan sadly.

"You might let me, now and again, if you don't mind, sir, hear news of Miss Allegra."

"The minx!" said old Loughlan sadly. Then he brightened: "But she stood up to 'em very fairly well last night, eh, Stretton?"

"Fine, sir!"

"Didn't turn a hair."

"You weren't—taken in—of course, sir?"

"Not my business to question what the lady said, my boy. Good enough for her, good enough for me. Really, that fellow—whatever husband for that beautiful woman!—nearly put us all into a very unpleasant position indeed. However, all's well that ends well."

"So the colonel remarked."

"A good platitude—useful thing sometimes."

"I wasn't at all sure whether you'd want to see me this morning."

"Really, my boy, really! We must hang together. Can't have fellows like that lording it over us. Besides"—here his old eyes twinkled—"one makes allowances. Beautiful woman, Mrs. Yarde, very. Can't press questions too closely. Take what one's told in a delicate situation, as long as it's pleasant. Personally, I thought little Miss Allegra's a very pleasant solution."

"It didn't hold water."

"What's that matter, my boy? That's *her* concern. And whether she was telling fibs, or Mrs. Yarde was telling 'em, doesn't signify. It's settled. 'Ours—ours'—dear me, I got another quotation up my sleeve—'ours not to make reply.' That's it—'ours not to make reply,' Stretton. Can I wish you luck, my boy?"

"Over there? Thanks."

"But over here, Stretton?"

"Luck's not coming my way."

"Ha!" said the old man wistfully.

"About occasional news, sir—"

"That's all right, my boy. You shall hear. But if you'll take my advice, you'll work and forget. However, advice—what is it?"

"A mighty poor thing, sir."

"Ah, you're right. It is. Like this juggled here?"

"Top hole."

"Fill up your glass. Make life merry, my boy."

The old man, sunny-tempered, full of anecdote, whiled away a bad hour or two for the young man. He saw him off, later, at Victoria. And on his return drive, he made a detour and stopped at the doleful flat whose address he had asked from Dorothy at dinner the night before. But he climbed long stone stairs, and stood rapping patiently at the unresponsive door for five minutes before he admitted to himself that she must have gone.

"The minx!" he thought, climbing back into his taxicab.

But he made it his business to seek her out when he returned, three days later, to Havering Village.

The girl had spent three stern days in which she had waged war against the force of all her human needs. The first had been a slack day. She had hung about the garage waiting an order to go out. Winter had come dismally upon the camp. A large expanse of frozen ground, a dark sky threatening snow, a horizon dim and thick gray, a whistling wind cutting up and down and around the streets of hutments, made for her mood a desolate environment. Her collar pulled up over her ears, her cap pulled down to meet it, her hands cuddling for warmth in the rough pockets of her greatcoat, she wandered about the garage looking toward the horizon north, south, east, and west. And now indeed it seemed like a bar encircling a cage in which she was pent. She longed to break away and rush beyond it in the great car. As she turned south, she could not but know: "He's there. Up there in that thick gray, frozen cold, flying—how do I know where? And here I am—here!"

She knew at last the terrible chafe and fret of the woman behind.

There came two days of continuous driving. Bent had returned, and he worked her hard. Work was a fine drug, and she always loved the manner in which a good car answered to all that she asked. The great car was like a friend. With her hand on the steering gear, she was never lonely. She avoided the colonel's kind and thoughtful scrutiny; she refused Lady Anstruther's invitations; she covered herself with a hardness that shone; and, after the way of women, she laughed that she might not cry.

Old Loughlan lay in wait for her on the first afternoon of his return, on the dark hill between village and camp. As she walked down the hill, dead beat, the stout figure, bundled in a huge over-

coat lighted by a glowing cigar tip, intercepted her.

"Good evening, Miss Dorothy," said he.

She replied: "Good evening, general," in a voice too bright and hard to convince the old man of its sincerity.

He turned to walk beside her.

"My dear," said he, "I came out because I was bored with my house and myself—yes, I've only just come back from town, and perhaps that's the reason why it seems so dismal, you know—and I came out for a good walk to put me in a better temper, and I meet you! That's charming! Have mercy on me and come in to dinner."

"But your walk, general?"

"I've had it, my dear," replied the old liar, "and I feel all the better for it. You needn't fear my temper, if you'll take pity on me. As a matter of fact, Mrs. Bain—bless the woman!—she's cooked a most wonderful dinner, she tells me. She always cooks a most wonderful dinner for my return from town—jealous of the catering at my club, I verily believe—and it seems a pity there shouldn't be some one to share it, and make a dull old boy merry, eh, my dear?"

As the girl entered the warm, kind house, the hardness melted away from her. Once again old Loughlan looked after her with every care and attention. Once again he persuaded her to the after-dinner mood of confidence. They took coffee to-night in the drawing-room, a little-used apartment. A big fire burned, and that was all the light. Old Loughlan purred about, getting liqueurs. Then he sat down in a large chair on the hearth, humanly wise and kindly, and the girl dropped on the rug and, laying her arms on his knees, put her head down on them and whispered:

"General, I'd like to cry."

"Lord bless you, dear!" the old man replied instantly. "Cry, then."

Dorothy cried.

"When a woman wants to cry," said he, with an arm around her shoulders, "let her indulge herself and get it over. It's not a morsel of good to her or any one else to bottle it up. The finest and strongest of you—you're all the same. You must cry sometimes."

"Do you understand," Dorothy murmured, "how sometimes one just wants——"

"To cling to some one? Do I not, my dear! Just temporary, of course," said he, with twinkling eyes, "and natural. It's a stern job, being alone. I've known women—— Why, I recall one time when I was let in for settling some business affairs for a woman I hardly knew. Well, I called on her, and she was a hard-faced, bitter little creature who people said was tough as leather, and not so very young, either—quite forty. A nice age, though—quite nice. Well, she was properly worried and bothered, and she hadn't had any one to let go to—her husband was dead—and she had got a feeling that she was on edge with the whole earth, and as if a collapse of everything that mattered was imminent. And I'd been in the room explaining things about five minutes, and I looked at her and she looks at me, and she says suddenly:

"Colonel Loughlan, do you know what I'd like to do?"

"Yes," I says, "I do. So you needn't mind saying it."

"I'd like to sit on your knee and cry," says she, with tears rolling down her face.

"You do it," I says, and I made her.

"And in ten minutes she was able to sit up and take a good grip on things and say—in fact she said it, my dear; I advised her to—"To hell with the old mortgage! I don't care!" And she came out to dinner with me, and I've never taken out a jollier little woman. Less'n one hour after. So now—we see, don't we?"

"You're a dear!" said the girl, laughing and crying.

"When you're better, I'm going to get you something I brought you from town."

"You *are* a dear!"

"So're you, miss. Now, your hanky's wet. Take this clean one."

The old man very gently dried her eyes, while she laughed.

"That's better," said he.

He rose and, leaving her sitting on the hearthrug, fetched a package from another room.

"Chocolates," said he, with a fat and sly smile. He sat down and watched her untie the ribbon.

"I love them, general," said she with real ecstasy.

"Course you do, my dear. I distrust a woman who doesn't eat sweets. When you've sampled 'em, I've got something else to show you. Seen the evening paper?"

"No."

"I thought you wouldn't have. Too busy. What a girl you are! Now, here we are!" From behind the cushion at his back, he produced the newspaper. "Can you see, my dear? Let's poke the fire."

He made a fine blaze, and, kneeling up, with her head close to his, she followed the direction of his indicating finger.

"There it is, my dear. I've read it, over and over. You take it. I'll light a cigar, with your permission."

Bending to the newspaper, she read a headline: "One Hero's Day in the Air." Then she turned suddenly a little away from Loughlan, so that her face was hidden while she read. But the old man was not looking at her; he was far too kind. He was lighting his cigar, and being faddy about the fire.

As she read on, thrills took her. Hot waves of emotion, of pride and fear, ran over her. She read of exploits of skill and daring so great and gallant as

to be nigh incredible to the watchers at home; she read of audacity that tempted death a score of times in an hour; she read of the light heart and the strong brain fused in mad, gay, and dreadful adventure.

"He flies the latest machine. Others watch him with generous envy and amazement. We out here call him 'the Gambler,' and he takes any kind of chance. When he lands safely with a big bag, we say: 'Gambler's luck again,' but we know it isn't only luck. It's a gay and incredible courage, a natural lust for fighting. You'd say, if you watched him for an hour, and if you didn't know that he had already won laurels enough alone to make life worth keeping, that he had no use for the future. He is so splendidly prodigal with it."

Old Loughlan sat pensive, and presently Dorothy spoke:

"It's exciting reading, and—don't you think this censorship of names—a little unnecessary?"

"Perhaps so," he said, rousing. "But we know, don't we? It's Grenfell. Good boy! I thought you'd like to see that. A dozen of those big birds in a morning! Not bad work, eh? I love to think of him. These reporters write tosh, though. That stuff about his future—I hate these maudlin surmises on the battlefield, just to color the picture. War needs no paint. Isn't blood red enough? And so you're pleased, miss?"

"I, general?"

"Yes, you. If you're not, you ought to be."

"One is always pleased when one's acquaintances——"

"Stuff, miss! You don't tell me! Why not be human, my dear?"

"I am painfully human, general."

"Poor child!"

She put her hand into his. They sat hand in hand for a long while before the fire, and now and again the old man

dipped into the chocolate box and put a sweet into her mouth.

"Having a nice evening, child?" said he.

"A lovely evening."

"Better than those poky rooms, all by yourself, no one to care whether you eat or starve?"

"I'll be disgruntled with life if you talk that way."

"I don't care, my dear. I'd like to disgruntle you with life. Yes, and to dismay you with life as you're living it."

"What is wrong?"

"You're living for war. Women must live for love, as well. Men want inspiring."

"Won't you leave it alone, general?"

"Why, if you really ask me."

"I do ask you. I ask you not to worry me, and judge me."

"Lord forbid I should judge such a pretty woman, Miss Dorothy!"

"That's no kind of a promise."

"It will serve you, my dear."

The old man made no comment when, later, as she stood in the hall putting on her greatcoat, she pushed the folded newspaper into a pocket, rather shyly, her eyes mistily bright. He walked home with her, and she had a warm feeling that companionship was good. She was sorry to say good-by to the stanch comrade.

There was a parcel for her next morning, by post. She was rather late—she was putting on her coat and cap in a hurry—and she had neither time nor very keen curiosity to open it before she ran out.

When she came home again, the sitting room was dark save for the glow of the fire. The kettle hissed on the hob. A meal was laid. To this she was used to return each day. This evening there lay on the table also the parcel which had arrived that morning.

On the hearth a stout and trim figure stood. Even in the low light, it was

clearly old Loughlan. As she peered at him, he advanced to meet her. He took her hands and said cheerfully:

"Come to take tea with you, my dear. Kettle's boiling. All looks very nice, 'pon my word. Perhaps being a soldier woman's not so bad, after all."

"It's good, general. I've told you that before."

"Over and over, you stubborn girl. Well, shall I make tea while you take off your things?"

And while she put aside her cumbersome coat and ran her fingers through her crushed hair to fluff it, as all women do, the old man made tea with his usual aplomb.

"A cup of tea," he said, "good, isn't it?"

He installed his hostess in a comfortable chair and remained standing on the hearth, back to the fire, feet apart.

The girl poured out two cups. He waited upon her, but took nothing himself except tea. He sipped that worriedly, looking out at her from under his suave brows, now puckered in a frown. He talked of this and that lightly. Then, when she had eaten and drunk, he advanced to the table, put his cup down, and said with a change of voice:

"My dear, there's a parcel from France, unopened. And it's been teasing me for three-quarters of an hour. Of all the incurious women——"

"From France, general!"

"Didn't you know?"

"I thought——"

"Of all the incurious women!" the old man repeated rather flutteringly, but Dorothy's hands were already on the package, fingering the knots with tremulous impatience.

"My penknife, I think, my dear——"

With a hand as tremulous as her own, Loughlan cut the string. She tore at the paper wrappings and revealed wood.

"Nailed down!" she uttered impatiently. "It'll take hours——"

"Not hours, my dear. We haven't hours to spare."

Dorothy looked up, her hand arrested.

"What do you mean, general?"

"Open your parcel first." Briskly he picked up the small poker and, using a very worn end as a lever, forced the box apart. "Now, my dear, now——"

A very proud and thrilled girl pulled out helmets blooded and scorched.

"German birdmen! My dear!" cried old Loughlan, transported.

A shapeless lump of twisted steel, a wrist watch smashed—— "A letter!" cried the general, as her hand dived among the trophies.

She pulled it out, but it was addressed in a strange hand. She became cool instantly. Her heart sank dolefully.

"I wonder," she said with little interest, "who has sent me these?"

The old man was reading over her shoulder.

DEAR MISS ALLEGRA: I am asked by Captain Grenfell to send you these, and to ask if he has now selected the proper bouquet for a war girl. I am to say no more.

And a strange signature closed the bald note.

"Why——why——couldn't Captain Grenfell send them himself?" asked Dorothy in a little voice, when she had read.

The old man was so palpably quiet that she looked up. She saw his brave face very sorrowful. She seized him with fierce hands.

"You came here to tell me something, general!"

"Yes, my dear. I have a letter, too. This evening's post." Then he pulled it out.

"I can't see," she said in a failing voice, clutching at it.

Loughlan put an arm around her.

"I'll tell you what it is, my dear. The boy's hurt, smashed——they say, perhaps

dying—is to be recommended for the V. C.—has done great things——” The old man cleared his throat. “His colonel writes to me. I’m glad to think the boy wanted me to hear.”

“He has no near relatives—no one—no one——”

“I shall go to him, my dear. For me, you see, there won’t be much difficulty. I telephoned the war office directly I had this. I’m leaving for town on the six-thirty, for France by a night boat. I—I don’t anticipate any hitch in these arrangements.”

“You’ll take me?”

The old man folded her right into two tender arms.

“Realizing I’d have to do so, my dear, I’ve sent Bain with a letter to your C. O. already. I don’t anticipate any hitch, my dear.”

“God bless you! God bless you!”

“Keep up. Don’t you cry now.”

“I shall never cry again, general.”

CHAPTER XVI.

There was a screen around Grenfell’s bed, and within the screen the broken man and Dorothy Allegra alone. His head had been untouched, and he smiled at her so brave and gay, so insolent and young, that she couldn’t realize what they had said—those doctors with the clever faces, those nurses with the compassionate faces, out beyond the screen in the ward where other men were dying or being saved. Grenfell spoke in a voice of fair strength:

“You’re keeping the last bouquet, darling, aren’t you?”

“Oh, Stretton! Don’t go! I will always want your bouquets, always, always, dearest!”

“That’s something to live for, anyway. You’d marry me, then, Dorothy, now?”

“I’d marry you any time, anywhere!”

“Here, as we are?”

“Could we, Stretton?”

“If *you* could, sweetheart, we could. It would be rather glorious to have my wife—even if only a few hours.”

“It would make me happy forever, Stretton.”

“It would make me happy forever, Dorothy. Sister! Sister!”

The figure in blue and white who had been hovering on the outskirts, came around the screen.

“We want to get married, sister,” said the young airman, smiling. “If the padre hustles, do you think all the formalities can be got through in time?”

“There aren’t so many formalities out here,” said the sister most gently.

“Will I last out, sister?”

“Of course you’ll last out!”

“Don’t bluff, sister.”

“Well, Sir Alfred’s going to look at you soon——”

“I’d rather get the padre here.”

The sister whispered to the kneeling girl:

“My dear, you mustn’t talk to him any more, or let him talk, if he’s to have a wedding and say his responses.”

For three hours then, Dorothy Allegra was parted from her lover, while old Loughlan took minutest care of her; and when she went back to the helpless soldier behind the screen, it was as a bride.

Just when the last words had been whispered from the chaplain’s lips, just when Dorothy had bent down and kissed Grenfell, and they were smiling at each other triumphantly, a message was whispered to the sister, and she said:

“Now, Mrs. Grenfell, you must go at once—for a little while. Go and wait in my quarters—this orderly will show you—for Sir Alfred Thomas—you know, the Harley Street man—is coming to see your husband at once.”

“Good-by, darling,” said Grenfell.

“Good-by, darling,” said Dorothy.

And she put her hand into old Loughlan’s, and they went out and sat in some

place about which neither of them could afterward remember the smallest thing. The girl leaned her dazed head against the old man's stout shoulder, while he kept up a flow of stubborn talk.

"They do such wonderful things for these poor dear lads now, you know, Dorothy. They mend smashed bodies as they were never mended before. And of course, if he gets through, it'll be a home billet for duration, anyway. My word, girl, won't you be proud of a husband like yours? A home billet, my dear. You can settle down somewhere and make each other very happy. A nice little place—outside town, I'd advise. You and he'll both want to be quiet. You'll be awfully happy. Made for each other, you two are—I saw that right from the start. Getting drowsy, my dear? *Not faint?* No? That's right. I don't suppose the doctor will be much longer. Very brusque and quick, these big fellows, generally.

Sure of themselves, of course. I liked that sister, didn't you? Wonderful the arrangements made for relatives visiting—all that sort of thing. Who's this, dear? Why—— Well, Sir Alfred?"

The great doctor looked down at the white girl. He had an austere face to which his khaki lent yet more austerity. But at the moment it was simply glad.

"Your husband'll pull through, Mrs. Grenfell. We won't let a man like that go. I shall see him again to-morrow. And now you may just go to him for one minute—one only. I will take you across myself. It's a fine hospital, isn't it? One of the best equipped——"

His voice was just like the far rumble of the guns—just sound, no more.

She was walking again down the long ward, slipping behind the screen, meeting the light of glad and passionate eyes. She stooped.

"Good night, darling," said Grenfell.

"Good night, darling," said Dorothy.

THE END.



COMMUNION

YOUR lips upon my white
 Arm in the slow moonlight
 Are like a spoken prayer,
 My loosened hair
 Is over all your cheek.
 If you or I should speak,
 Our eyes' words would be stilled.
 A breath is in the room
 As though a rose found bloom;
 A sound is on our ears
 As though a wild bird trilled
 Far off, in gardens dim
 With dusk of fading years.
 If God should stand before
 Our miracle-flung door,
 There would be no surprise
 In our calm, welcoming eyes.

MARY CAROLYN DAVIES.

A l m's

By Edna St. Vincent Millay

MY heart is what it was before,
A house where people come and go;
But it is winter with your love,
The sashes are beset with snow.

I light the lamp and lay the cloth,
I blow the coals to blaze again;
But it is winter with your love,
The frost is thick upon the pane.

I know a winter when it comes:
The leaves are listless on the boughs;
I watched your love a little while,
And brought my plants into the house.

I water them and turn them south,
I snap the dead brown from the stem;
But it is winter with your love;
I only tend and water them.

There was a time I stood and watched
The small, ill-natured sparrows' fray,
I loved the beggar that I fed,
I cared for what he had to say.

I stood and watched him out of sight;
To-day I reach around the door
And set a bowl upon the step;
My heart is what it was before,

But it is winter with your love;
I scatter crumbs upon the sill
And close the window, and the birds
May take or leave them, as they will.

In Greenwich Village



By Louise Winter

Author of "Temperament," etc.



THE light was failing fast, and the chill of late afternoon stole into the big, bare studio.

Brenda May, working furiously, as she always did when the creative fire burned in her breast, was not conscious of passing time or of cold, but José Varon bore it as long as he could and then, with a shiver that convulsed his slender frame, got up.

"Enough for to-day, *alma mia!* Even the soul of me, that adores you, freezes." His rich voice, with the faintest trace of a foreign accent, had in it a note of irony. He stepped down from the model stand and approached the easel in front of which Brenda still sat. "Give over for to-day. You have done wonderfully, I am sure. Now put aside work and let me take you in my arms and warm you with love."

Brenda shook her head impatiently. "You live love! You eat it, you drink it, you sleep it! You think you work, but you don't! You pass a certain amount of time impatiently, and then to your real business of life! I'm not made of the same temper! I wish you hadn't fallen in love with me! I wanted you for a model, not a lover!"

She put down her crayon and folded her long arms across her slightly swelling breast. Then she looked from her

charcoal presentment of the man to the man himself and scowled.

He came up to her side with his graceful, catlike step and paused. He, too, looked from her sketch of him to the mirror which reflected his vivid personality, and he smiled.

"Do you think I would be your model if I did not love you? You distort my features with your quaint art. It is not I who stares in that black-and-white fashion; it is your curious conception of me. I am a man, not a pagan god!"

She knew that his criticism was just. Her conception of him had fallen lamentably short of her own vision. Her failure infuriated her and, with a quick gesture, she seized the offending sketch between her long fingers and tore it to shreds.

"Your love disturbs me! I can't work!" She turned on him, blaming him for her failure.

Standing, they were of about the same height, but now he could look down upon her, and his dark eyes were compassionate.

"It is unfulfilled love that is disturbing. Give yourself to me, Brenda, and your genius will soar skyward."

She leaned forward and raised her head. She caught his eyes with hers,

long and yellow, as if she would probe to the depths of the soul of which he boasted.

"How can you promise that? If my conception of you is wrong—and I am an artist and I do not see with my eyes alone—how can you, who are an actor and only reflect the moods of others, know something about me which I do not know myself?" She spoke contemptuously of his profession, and her slighting tone sent the blood to his sallow cheeks.

"Because I am read in the ways of women," he answered gently. Some day she should pay for all she was making him suffer, and he could afford to wait.

"The ways of women!" she repeated impatiently. "You class us all together, and each one of us is a separate entity!"

"We are all children of one mother, and Nature is niggardly. She employs the same material in the fashioning of us all. Men and women, we respond to certain common demands; we fulfill her purposes in the same way."

"I am not a woman like dozens you have known. There is a new breed of us on earth to-day, a further step in evolution."

"A new sex?" He smiled faintly.

"Sexless, rather!"

"You called me Pan, a pagan god, but he piped a tune to which you must listen. You are a rebel because you think captivity will clip the wings of your creative power, but some day I shall tame you so that you will not struggle to escape my arms."

With a superb gesture of defiance, she rose and stood before him, taunting him with his impotence to overpower her physically. Her eyes were on a level with his, and her splendid strength almost matched his. In a struggle between them, it was by no means an assured thing which would have come out the victor.

"I can't see that day ahead," she told him.

"Brenda, marry me!"

"And let the flames consume us?"

"Our spirits will nourish the fire so that it shall never burn out."

"Now you indeed claim deity for yourself!"

He caught hold of her arms above the elbows. His sinewy fingers ate into her flesh. He held her firmly; then he brought his face close to hers.

"I am going to wake you with my kiss," he told her threateningly.

She sighed.

"If you only could!"

He drew back, chilled to the marrow by her skepticism. He could not traverse the length of the road alone. If she would not lend herself to enchantment, he could not bind her eyes with a fairy bandage. He held the torch of passion in his hand, but she must breathe upon it with her lips to make it flame.

"A child would make you human," he said sternly.

"That only proves how primitive you are."

He leaned forward and stung her lips with his, but though she did not repulse him, she was curiously calm under the passion of his caress.

He left her shortly after, irritated by his failure to rouse her to an answering degree of emotion, and she sat alone in her bare studio and wondered why she could not flame as other women did.

José Varon, a South American, educated in Paris and coming to New York in the train of a French actor, had elected to remain in America. Temperamental to an extreme degree as he was, the ordinary theatrical manager failed to appreciate his genius, and he had drifted to the Village Theater, where Brenda, who was doing the posters for the new plays, had met him. He told her that she was more French

than any grisette of the Quarter, with her red hair piled on top of her small head, her long yellow eyes and the thin curve of her scarlet mouth, her black smock and her blindness to anything but the inspiration of the moment.

Brenda, who came from Bangor, Maine, was flattered at being told that she looked French. She had never been abroad—her people couldn't afford it—and so far all she had earned was only enough to allow her to rent this big, bare studio in Fourth Street, where she worked furiously and dreamed of the heights of Montmartre.

Greenwich Village accepted her—her queer clothes, her radical views, and her clever posters. Some day she would drift uptown and become a fad, and when the Philistines claimed her, she would forget what she owed to bohemia. But that is life, and the Village lived for to-day, and to-day Brenda was its idol.

The idol had clay feet, but only she knew it. She saw into the depths of her soul and found the vacant spaces. The remedy lay at hand, but her New England conscience, beaten into acquiescence, but still quivering at times, would not allow her to avail herself of it. Brenda talked revolt, but lived in austerity. And the Village watched to see who would carry off the flower of Fourth Street.

José Varon was not the only man who battered at the door of her virginal heart. There was the editor of a radical weekly who taught free thought and believed that it applied only to free love, and there was a young novelist who lived in the Washington Mews and dined at Polly's, in order to gain material for a realistic study of life in Greenwich Village.

Peter Graham, the novelist, was rich, and his dip into bohemia was a morning bath. He made that point quite clear the first time he met Brenda. If

she would marry him, he would take her uptown as far as the East Forties, and if she wished to go on painting, she could have a studio done by an interior decorator.

Brenda liked Peter's mouth, with its indrawn corners, but the idea of housing her rebel spirit in a studio done by a firm of men decorators sent her into a spasm of mirth. Peter was six feet tall, and on this occasion he lost his temper and shook her. In that moment, she came near loving him, but he spoiled it all by apologizing and abjectly kneeling at her feet to sue for pardon.

Maxon, the editor of *The Red Rag*, never got below the level of her eyes, though he had to look up to them, for he was shorter even than Varon and rotund in build.

These were the three who outdistanced others in the pursuit of the maid, Brenda, though many who met her once or twice came under her spell and would have joined the chase had she not discouraged them. She tried hard to love; she tried too hard, and the strain told on her nerves, but never reached her heart.

Of the three men, José Varon appealed to her most. He was a man of varied talents; he knew more of art than she did; he wrote charming verse both in his native tongue and in French, and his acting had all the delicacy of a pastel. She liked him. His mind attracted hers; the touch of his supple hands was soothing, and even his lips did not repel her. Why, then, could she not respond to him as he wished?

She revolved the question in her mind until it grew dark within the studio, and finally the cold penetrated even to her Maine-bred bones. She got up, stretched herself, and struck a match, intending to light a fire in the ridiculous stove which was totally inadequate to heat the room. But as she knelt in front of the cavernous door, she glanced

up and saw that the tall clock in the corner pointed to five minutes to seven.

Her healthy body demanded food, although her unhealthy mind preferred dwelling on the situation that intrigued her. She had nothing in the house, so she must go out and, grumbling at the necessity of feeding her superb body, she stripped off her working smock and pulled on another of black silk. She made no attempt to smooth her hair; it curled naturally, so it did not matter that little elf locks escaped and straggled about her ears and over her low, broad forehead. She wiped her hands, for they were smeared with charcoal, and dusted her face lightly with powder. Then, hatless and coatless, she opened her door and ran down four flights to the street below and across the way to Polly's.

It was a big night there, and for a moment Brenda stood in the doorway, glancing about for a vacant seat. Almost instantly Maxon, from the head of the long table against the wall, saw her and beckoned to her. As she passed through the room on her way to the long table, others saw her and called to her, but though she responded gayly, she kept on her way. Peter Graham would have come to meet her; Maxon merely moved up to make room for her. Varon would have welcomed her; Maxon merely said:

"You're late, and the goulash is all gone."

Brenda smiled.

"Then tell them to bring me the next most for my money. I'm hungry." She did not expect Maxon to pay for her dinner.

Maxon half turned in his seat to probe her with his beady eyes.

"What have you been doing?" he asked, and his tone was insolent. He would not take her work seriously. "The serious business of womanhood is love!" he declared, and he acted on that premise.

"I've been trying to immortalize José Varon," she told him calmly, and she had the satisfaction of seeing him scowl. He feared Varon as he did not fear Graham.

"Leave that to the future. What do you see in him? Apollo?"

"No, Pan."

"When the gods arrive, what becomes of the half gods, Brenda May?"

"Yes, but to most of us the gods never come."

"That's because you won't open all doors wide to them. They won't squeeze through cracks."

"My hinges are rusty. You see, they're church doors, and they open wide but once a week."

"Oil them." He was drinking Chianti. Now he filled her water glass from his bottle and pushed it toward her.

Her first impulse was to refuse. She had no wish to slide to perdition on the red sled of alcohol. Then she reconsidered. Her vitality to-night was at a low ebb. Perhaps, if she quickened it artificially, she might induce a flow of emotion through her veins.

She drank steadily, deliberately, but her very deliberation nullified her intention. She said to herself expectantly:

"The next drink ought to affect me," but apparently it did not.

Maxon watched her curiously. He knew that she was usually abstemious, yet they had finished one quart of Chianti and were well along on the second, and her eyes were still untouched and there was no change in her color. She drank the wine as if it were water and apparently with the same effect.

"What are you trying to do, Brenda?" he asked, driven to seek a reason for her extraordinary conduct.

"I want to feel." He tone was petulant. She stretched her arm along the table, and the loose sleeve of her smock fell back, showing the smooth white

flesh of her beautiful forearm. "I'm human," she declared dramatically. "If you pinch me, I feel it. Why don't I feel kisses?"

Maxon, who drank himself into a stupor every night, was by this time stimulated to a degree of clairvoyance. He bent his head and bit deep into the firm white flesh.

Brenda screamed with pain. She pulled away her arm and surveyed the ugly bruise made by his irregular teeth.

"Love hurts like that—sometimes—Brenda May," he told her, and then he got slowly to his feet. "Come!" he said. "We'll go over to the theater and see what your half god makes of modernity!"

But Brenda did not move. Anger surged through her. She wanted to strike Maxon across the mouth, but instinct held her back. If she struck him publicly, she would have to atone by letting him drag her through the streets of the Village chained to his triumphal chariot.

Anger reacted on the wine, and she flung up her head defiantly.

"No! I could never see through your eyes, even though your wine has unloosed a flood in my breast." Her voice was low, but it throbbed with a passion that surprised herself.

Maxon paused. He fixed her again with his steady stare.

"Come! I want you! Together we'll watch the flood race on to destruction."

She felt the magnetism of his glance and half rose from her chair, but before she could stand upright, she caught sight of Peter Graham coming through the door. She sank back. Peter had saved her.

Graham took the chair that Maxon had vacated, and Brenda leaned against his arm.

"Buy me champagne to-night, Peter. Something has broken loose in here."

She tapped her breast with her long, pointed forefinger.

He glanced from the Chianti bottles to her flushed face and then to the bruise on her arm, and shook his head.

"You don't care for it. Why will you do it, dear?" He could stand at a comfortable distance and watch personal tragedies unroll before his critical eyes, but he could not view apathetically any dramatic happening to the woman he loved.

"Peter, has love as many facets as a diamond? Maxon hurts me, José Varon troubles me, but you and your love are like a great down comfortable, soft and soothing. I'd like to put my head on your shoulder, Peter, and sleep for a long time."

Graham felt an immense pity for her. He no longer wanted to marry her; he saw that marriage would not bind her for any length of time. She was destined for freedom—to belong at all times to herself and never to own any man as master—and he had no wish for a temporary dominion over her. But he did not wish her to fall a prey to Maxon's brutality or to Varon's shaded cruelties, and he determined to save her from them.

"Suppose we test that quality of my love, Brenda? Will you trust yourself to me? We'll go to my rooms, and you shall have your champagne there."

Anger had done what the wine had failed to do—it had blurred her usually keen perception—and she acceded without protest to his suggestion.

Outside, he hailed a taxi and, putting her in, gave his address. She lay back, her eyes closed, and presently the taxi stopped in front of the Mews.

Graham helped her out and into his rooms on the ground floor. She had visited them in company with others, but it was the first time she had ever entered them alone. She glanced around. They seemed unfamiliar. On other occasions, the furniture had been

pushed back against the wall to accommodate the guests.

There was a brick fireplace and in front of it a couch heaped with pillows. Brenda approached it swiftly.

"It's like your love, Peter!" and she flung herself down with a little luxurious sigh.

Graham drew up a chair beside her and took one of her slender hands in his.

"You'll always find my love like this, dear—protecting, not bruising," he said gently.

Brenda smiled at him. It was her last conscious effort.

Hours afterward, she woke. Graham's bell was jangling furiously. She sat up and shook her hair out of her eyes. Her head throbbed, and her eyes ached; her mouth felt parched, and her body felt stiff. She could not understand what had happened—why she was here, and why she was so uncomfortable.

Graham came out of an inner room. He was wearing a long dressing gown and he had a pipe between his teeth.

"It's Varon! I saw him from the window, and it's three o'clock."

His tone was significant. He thought he knew the delicate South American temperament. Varon would raise a row, but he would not want the woman he had tracked to another man's rooms.

"Have I been asleep all this time?" Brenda yawned. "And I've kept you up, too! Make José stop that noise, and he can take me home." She swung her feet to the floor and flung her arms over her head.

Graham paused and looked at her. Was she as ignorant of men as that? If Varon saw her now, he would tear her to pieces. Nothing would convince him of her innocence.

"My dear Brenda, why not finish out your sleep? I'll settle Varon."

He took another step toward the

door, but before he had reached it, she was at his side.

"Peter, I trusted you!" she gasped out her confidence in him.

"And I haven't betrayed your trust. I've shielded you from yourself as well as from others."

"Wait! What does that mean?" She was piecing together the incidents that had led to her being in Graham's rooms at three o'clock in the morning. "I asked you for champagne. I wanted to blot out Maxon's red wine—and this." She indicated the bruise on her arm with a shudder.

"I gave you what you really asked for, Brenda—protection against the ravening beast that last night raised its head for the first time in your breast. Stay here quietly until daylight, and then go home with the new knowledge of yourself which this experience should have taught you, and make up your mind whether you are to be ultimately a woman, with all that it means, or a thing that men like Maxon prey upon."

He unfastened her clinging touch on his arm and opened his door, going out into the hall to dismiss the intruder who clamored for entrance.

Brenda leaned against the wall for support. A wave of revulsion swept over her. What she had gone out to find had not been love, but passion. What she had found was a compassionate tenderness greater than any ephemeral emotion. She had learned herself, her complex self, peering with desiring eyes through the bars that conscience had set up. Peter had urged her to take cognizance of this inner craving of hers. He had said that she still had the power to choose. Dear Peter! She could not do better than give her life into his hands. She was afraid of herself and the ravening beast that she bore within her own breast.

She waited confidentially for Graham's return. He would subdue José,

and she shivered a little as she thought of the South American temperament that scorched all it breathed upon. And then, into her almost placid reflections, came the noise of a shot, muffled, but distinct to waking ears.

She flung open the door and rushed down the hall to the street entrance.

In the dim light, she made out two figures—one stretched full length upon the floor, the other bending over the prostrate form.

She stumbled forward.

"Peter!" She gasped out his name.

Varon lifted his head.

"So they told me the truth! You were with him! He would not admit or deny, so I killed him!" His eyes flashed loathing as they took in the dishevelment of her appearance.

Brenda could think of nothing but the quiet form on the tiled floor.

"He is dead, and I can't thank him," she said slowly, and two great tears welled up in her eyes and brimmed over.

Varon stared at her. She was not acting like a woman bereft of her lover.

"Thank him!" he repeated hoarsely.

"For showing me to myself and putting a weapon in my hands against such as you."

"He was your lover!" Varon's breath came fast. A fearful doubt swept over him. Suppose, after all, he had made a mistake.

"He loved me, not as you and Maxon do, but as a good man loves."

"And you—you loved him?"

"As one might love Christ." He was dead, so there was no blasphemy in her declaration.

And then Peter Graham opened his eyes. Brenda stooped to him swiftly.

"Peter! Oh, Peter! Are you much hurt?"

A curious shamed look swept over his face, and a flush succeeded his sickly pallor.

"No, winged, that's all."

Blood dripped from his sleeve, and as he saw it, he shuddered. Since his boyhood, he had been unable to conquer his aversion to the sight of blood.

Varon stood by, gaping as if a corpse had risen.

"You—you live! But I took aim at your heart!" He could not understand that his shot had failed of effect.

Brenda looked up. She had slipped her arm under Graham's shoulders and was supporting him slightly.

"Help me to get him inside before any one comes." She was suddenly practical. A tragedy could take care of itself; a near-tragedy must be covered up.

Varon gnawed his under lip savagely, but he did her bidding. Between them, they assisted Graham, who was rapidly overcoming his faintness, into his rooms and onto the couch where Brenda had passed the early hours of the night. Then Varon, who had some slight knowledge of surgery, bound up the wound that he had inflicted. Upon examination, it proved to be merely a flesh wound. His long, supple fingers bandaged deftly, but as he worked, he never raised his somber eyes to the face of the man he had tried to kill.

Brenda, helping silently, wondered how it would all end.

When the dressing was finished, Varon stepped back.

"I am at your disposal, Graham," he said. "In my country, I would give you a chance to pot me, but here I suppose you can only have me arrested." His manner was arrogantly defiant.

Brenda started forward to protest that Peter would not dream of such a thing. Varon in prison! It was inconceivable. Then she held back. The men ignored her. They must settle it between them.

A twinge of pain made Graham irritable.

"That's what I should do!" he re-

torted. "What do you mean by breaking into a man's house and shooting him down?"

"I came for her!" Varon's eyes smoldered for a moment.

Graham forgot his earlier rôle of arbiter of Brenda's fate.

"She's free to go with you," he said coldly.

"Free! After last night!" Varon went back to his first premise.

"She still belongs to herself, Varon, but if she's wise, she'll not trust her happiness in such reckless hands. You have too much temperament."

"And you have none at all! You have only the thistledown passions and alarm-clock emotions of a commercial race! It was because I thought she was different that I loved her. But if I could believe that she stayed here alone in the dark with you, I don't think I'd want her!"

"How dare you doubt me?" Brenda broke in tempestuously.

"Doubt you? It's the other thing I dare not believe of you!"

His sneer angered her, and then the sight of his pain-ravaged face stirred a tender emotion in her breast.

"He strikes at me because he still loves me," she thought, and she held back the retort that rose to her lips.

Graham took up the cudgels in her defense.

"And yet, Varon, if it weren't true, do you think I would have opened my door to you?" he asked bitterly.

"I would have broken it down!"

"It's a strong door, like our natures—braced to withstand the assaults of ungovernable passions."

"But you loved her?" Again Varon struck the keynote to which his own nature responded.

"Yes."

"And your love made no demands?"

"It was love—not flesh hunger."

"Stop!" Again Brenda flung herself between them. "Am I only a thing to

be fought over? I tell you I won't have it!"

"Men will always quarrel over you while they think there's a chance to take you from each other, Brenda. It's your own indecision that stimulates the chase," Graham answered her from his larger knowledge.

She frowned thoughtfully. Varon's entrance had complicated the matter so that the earlier solution of the affair was no longer possible.

"When I came in here last night, Peter, I wanted to stay," she began slowly, wondering how she should phrase the change that had come over her.

"And yet you ask me to believe against the evidence of my ears?" Varon burst out, his face working convulsively.

"Your faith is immaterial. It's what comes out of this that matters." Graham lost patience. "A body or a woman's soul!"

Brenda flashed him a look of thanks. How he understood! Dear Peter! If one desired only protection, how simple it would be to trust him! Then her eyes traveled swiftly to Varon. He was suffering, and suddenly she wanted to put her arms about him and comfort him.

"That was last night," she concluded. "But this morning——" She turned to Varon.

He saw what was coming and stepped back.

"You have changed. But do you think I want you now, with the aroma of last night about you always?" He made a gesture of repudiation.

Brenda ignored it. She was so sure of herself. She pointed to the couch, with its tumbled pillows, from which Graham had risen.

"I was sleeping there, and dreaming of you, when you woke me. You wakened me out of more than sleep,

José," she said, and then she slipped her hand in his arm.

He trembled as he realized that it meant her surrender.

"If I could only believe!" It was a final flicker of doubt.

The face she turned to his was radiant.

"Look at me! I love you! Come!"

She pulled at his sleeve, and with only a fleeting backward glance at Graham, who had shown her the way, she drew Varon toward the door. Together they went out into the morning.

Peter Graham never forgave himself. He had learned too late that in the game of love it is not well to ask nothing and give all.



VIOLETS AND THE WOMAN

IF youth must die, then let it pass
Like withered grass beneath the sky,
But not where jostling crowds reel by.

If hope must leave, then let it go
Like blooms that blow to earth, decayed,
But touched by dreams that cannot fade.

The buds she wears send perfumed breath
To call for death; the woe she bears
Through some mad alchemy is theirs.

ELIAS LIEBERMAN.

Ainslee's Book of the Month

THE AVALANCHE, by Gertrude Atherton; Frederick A. Stokes Company, New York; \$1.35.

SAN FRANCISCO society has a flavor all its own. It is sophisticated and decorative, avid of sensations, and incredibly spendthrift. It is permeated by the spirit—and the ancestries—of Forty-nine. This has resulted in a marked drift away from puritanism, to be observed in no other American city. San Francisco does not pattern itself upon New York. It goes for inspiration directly to Europe, preferably to Paris.

With this colorful material at her disposal, Gertrude Atherton, herself a native of San Francisco, has written a series of novels which occupy a high place in contemporary American literature. The latest, published this spring, is entitled "The Avalanche." It is labeled a "mystery story" by the author. Certainly, a vastly intriguing mystery is propounded in the first paragraph, is developed with consummate skill through the book and solved in the final chapter in unexpected fashion.

The suspense is always legitimate, never forced, and the story is correspondingly superior, as a story, to the catchpenny "thriller." But its principal merit lies in its portraits of wealthy San Franciscans, of men who worked like Titans during the reconstruction period following the earthquake and fire, of women whose frivolity was as brazen as it well could be.

Price Ruyler has married out of his set. His bride is a French girl, Hélène Delano, born in California, but brought up in Rouen in accordance with rigid bourgeois traditions. Her father had died when she was two months old.

This, at least, is the family history told briefly and casually by Madame Delano.

In the second year of their married life, an impalpable cloud appears between them. Hélène is unhappy. She is keeping something hidden from her husband. He tries to solve this domestic problem, but tells himself at the same time that he is only imagining its existence. Then he overhears an equivocal conversation between his mother-in-law and one of the toughest characters in San Francisco. Madame Delano is being threatened with blackmail. The inference is that she has been recognized as a former denizen of the underworld. Ruyler hires a detective.

The husband wishes to save his home. He is willing to ignore antecedents within reason, so long as Madame Delano can be induced to leave California. But he is tortured by the fear that Hélène's parentage may have been so bad that confidence in her virtue will become impossible.

Again, he finds it difficult to connect Hélène's partial estrangement with a past of which she had obviously been ignorant at the time she married him. Has she, also, been victimized by blackmailers? Or has she succumbed to the vices of the cocktail-drinking, bridge-playing, debt-ridden element of the society in which he has placed her? The need to learn the truth, however ugly, becomes an obsession with him.

Gertrude Atherton writes brilliantly in "The Avalanche." There is none of the half-baked psychology and sloppiness of style which mars many American stories as compared with the work of English novelists. It is a book which should find a place on every library table.

W. A. R.



PLAYS AND PLAYERS

By

EDWIN CARTY RANCK

IN a recent issue of AINSLEE'S, I expressed the opinion that the time was ripe for a revival of romance—that the public was hungry for the frocks and frills and the swords and thrills of a bygone day, when men and women had leisure to enjoy life and when there was no such thing as a tired business man. Imagine, by the way, a tired business man wearing knee breeches and a powdered wig! Well, since that suggestion was made in this department, New York has seen a recrudescence of romance in the theater, and although some of these romantic plays have failed, it was not due to the discouragement of the public, but to the fact that the plays themselves were lacking in merit.

There is food for thought in the reflection that the revivals of such romantic comic operas as "Robin Hood" and "The Bohemian Girl," by the Society of American Singers, have been playing to capacity audiences at the Park Theater; and that Mr. Otis Skinner, in a revival of Emile Faber's delightful romantic comedy, "The Honor of the Family," has been given one of the most enthusiastic welcomes of his stage career. Not in years has an American actor had such a reception as was accorded Mr. Skinner on the first night of this revival. It reminded one of a Sarah Bernhardt opening night.

But, on the other hand, such a half-

baked romantic play as Mr. Philip Moeller's "Molière" was a failure because Mr. Moeller did not have the genius commensurate with the lofty ambition to transfer to the stage from the pages of history the greatest of all French dramatists. Nor do I know of any living dramatist who could have performed this feat. It is one of the things that can't be done. However, Mr. Moeller was given respectful attention, and one critic said that the play brought back a mood that was needed in our theater. It is needed sadly, and such plays as Molière" and "Mis' Nelly of N' Orleans"—both the work of ambitious young men—are steps in the right direction.

Years ago I suggested that it would be an admirable idea to have a theater in New York devoted exclusively to the presentation of romantic plays, the company to be headed by Mr. Otis Skinner, the finest romantic actor in this country, supported by players who have specialized in romantic plays. Such a venture would, I am sure, meet with enthusiastic support from the public. It was not long ago that playgoers were saying that a theater devoted exclusively to opéra comique in English would not be a success in this country. Let them try to obtain a seat any night at the Park Theater, the home of opéra comique in New York, and they will be forced to concede their error. The

public has heard enough of "barrage," "camouflage," "over the top," and "over there," and longs now to substitute such words as "sirrah," "gadzooks," "trusty blade," and the like.

"Molière" was the most ambitious production of the theatrical season now drawing to a close. It was presented by Henry Miller, who, playing the part of Molière himself, gave the play gorgeous settings, and spared no expense in surrounding himself with a particularly admirable cast. The story concerns Molière, his beautiful young wife Armande, Louis XIV., and the Marquise de Montespan, the cruel and designing mistress of the king. Angered because Molière scorns her love, De Montespan proves to the dramatist that his wife is carrying on an intrigue with another, and the play ends with the death of Molière, just as the king, with whom he had quarreled, was prepared to take him back to the regal bosom again. That's all there is to the plot, and the only bit of drama in the play, outside of the actual death of Molière, was a tense scene between the dramatist and De Montespan when, spurned by Molière, the crafty mistress leads him to a window and shows him his wife in a secret garden below, declaring her love for another man.

Playgoers owe a debt of gratitude to Mr. Miller for producing this play, artificial and indifferent as it is, because it gives that rare actress Blanche Bates a wonderful opportunity in the part of the king's mistress. This actress has not been seen on the stage for many years, but in the interim her powers have ripened. As *De Montespan*, she does the finest acting I have ever seen her do. All the craftiness, hypocrisy, dangerous charm, and subtlety of this unscrupulous woman are superbly depicted. Henry Miller as Molière gave a very bad performance. His was a Molière that history refutes. Holbrook Blinn as Louis XIV. was authoritative,

but he was *not* the Grand Monarch, and Estelle Winwood was a beautiful, but unconvincing, Armande. Alice Gale as La Forest, Molière's cook, was excellent.

One of the most satisfactory and perfectly rounded performances that I have seen this season is that of Otis Skinner as Colonel Philippe Bridau, in "The Honor of the Family." This is a stage masterpiece that deserves to rank with the finest creations the American stage has ever seen. In its way, it is as artistic as Joseph Jefferson's *Rip Van Winkle* and far more robust. Mr. Skinner plays the part of a veteran of the Napoleonic wars who returns home to find his senile uncle in the clutches of a female adventuress who is conniving for his fortune with the aid of a male accomplice. The honor of the family is at stake, and it is the task of Colonel Bridau to preserve it, which he does with delicious swagger and finesse. From the time of the colonel's dramatic stage entrance until the final drop of the curtain, Mr. Skinner dominates the stage with his masterful personality. And how he does swagger! There is no one on the stage who can swagger with the consummate art of Mr. Skinner. The entire supporting cast acted with zest and an appreciative understanding of the spirit of the play. Evelyn Vardon as the adventuress proved herself to be a comedienne who will bear watching.

"Please Get Married," the joint work of James Cullen and Lewis Allen Browne, is a farcical nightmare that will probably be a hit because it has a bedroom scene that out-Woods Al Woods at his best. A pair of lovers are married by a burglar in clergyman's clothes. On their honeymoon, they are pursued by their frantic parents and the stern chase is a long one, leading to a bridal chamber with twin beds and a naughty-naughty atmosphere. But it all ends harmlessly, for the burglar was

not a real burglar after all. He was a real preacher suffering from amnesia, and the marriage was genuine. Edith Taliaferro and Ernest Truex squeeze many laughs from their parts, and Margaret Johnston was extraordinarily good in a small bit.

"A Sleepless Night" is still another bedroom farce, but it is one of the most inane plays I ever tried to sit through. It is minus "pep" and purpose, and the only good thing about it was the final curtain. The title, too, is a misnomer, because I saw many persons around me sleeping soundly. Ernest Glendinning, a clever young actor, is wasted in this play.

The most unique feat of the season has been performed by that versatile genius of the theater, George M. Cohan, who, not content with saving "A Prince There Was" from utter dissolution by jumping into the title rôle himself at a moment's notice, has now taken an old bit of theatrical junk and turned it into a costly piece of stage property. In accomplishing this almost miraculous feat, he also coined a word that will be with us for a long time. That word is "Cohanization," and "The Royal Vagabond" is being presented as a "Cohanized opera." It is just that. Presented out of town as a serious comic opera, it proved to be quite too serious for success, so the astounding Mr. Cohan galvanized it into life by a hypodermic injection of Cohan "pep," and now it is a leaping, bounding success that will be playing in New York until the cows come home—whenever that is.

The program of "The Royal Vagabond" reads as follows: "A Cohanized opéra comique in three acts. Book and lyrics by Stephen Ivor Szinney and William Cary Duncan. Music by Doctor Anselm Goetzl." But on studying my program more closely, I discovered that six of the musical numbers came from the pen—or the typewriter—of the ubiquitous George, two

of them being the most whistly and popular of all.

"The Royal Vagabond" is easily the best musical show in New York. There is a verve to the performance that is irresistible. The genius of Mr. Cohan—and he is undoubtedly a genius—was repressed during the war, although his "Over There" was the most popular of all war songs. But now the war is over and Cohan seems to be having the time of his life upsetting stage precedents and performing the impossible. He is the Theodore Roosevelt of the stage!

"A Little Journey," by Rachel Crothers, is a comedy of chuckles. No wonder ex-President Taft was so pleased! He must have shaken like a bowlful of jelly. The chief charm of Miss Crothers' play is its apt characterization and its keen observation of detail. A young woman has been jilted by the man she thought she loved and is going back to a place where she knows she will be unwelcome. The entire action of the play, with the exception of the last act, takes place in a Pullman car. There the heroine meets the strong young Westerner who is so familiar to us on stage and screen and, when the train is wrecked, she finds herself and her happiness in the arms of said Westerner.

The plot is almost absent, but Miss Crothers has concerned herself with the various nuances of character among the Pullman passengers. I know of no other playwright in this country, with the possible exception of Augustus Thomas, who is better at this sort of thing than Miss Crothers. All of her plays are the outgrowth of character, and she is a keen and unerring observer of human nature. Like John Galsworthy, she believes that the playwright who depends on situation rather than upon characterization in the writing of a play "should be himself depended."

It may also be said that the acting

was on a plane with the quality of the play itself. Cyril Keightley played the Westerner with that quiet sincerity which distinguishes all of his stage work, and Grace Ellsworth was deliriously funny as *Mrs. Welch*. Gilda Varesi made the most of a small part. Ethel Dane was a beautiful, but somewhat anæmic, *Julie Rutherford*, the heroine who finds herself. Somehow *Julie* was to me the most unconvincing character in the play.

Marjorie Rambeau did a wonderful bit of acting in "The Fortune Teller." I use the past tense advisedly, because I am certain "The Fortune Teller" will neither be telling nor making any fortunes by the time this article appears. This new play by Leighton Graves Osmun is the story of a mother who deserted her son, a weakling, when he was a baby, and then tries to mold his career for him during a crucial period of his life. It is a drama of mother love, and before it is over the audience is weary of the word "mother." The proper title for this play would have been "No Mother to Guide Him." It is frankly boresome because only one mood is maintained from the first to the last curtain, with precious little drama to relieve the dead waste of words. And you can't sympathize with the young man because, if he had been worth his salt, he wouldn't have needed his mamma all the time to bolster him up. This very good young man had the spine of a jellyfish, and no one can sympathize with a jellyfish.

Stuart Walker's third bill this season at the Punch and Judy Theater consisted of Lord Dunsany's one-act play, "The Tents of the Arabs," and a stage version of "The Book of Job." This is Mr. Walker's most anæmic bill and was hardly worth the doing. "The Tents of the Arabs" is diluted Dunsany, and *Job* furnishes George Gaul with a gorgeous elocutionary opportunity.

"Penny Wise," which is far too good for Broadway, will probably be off the boards by the time this review appears, but it is the best characterized comedy that I have seen this season, with the exception of "A Little Journey." It is a story of Lancashire life and concerns the efforts of a family to collect the life insurance of the eldest son by getting him out of town and pretending he is dead. But he won't stay put and returns at the wrong time, gloriously intoxicated, much to the discomfiture of the conspirators. The plot is quite flimsy, but there is much quiet fun in the play, and the acting of Lionel Atwill and Molly Pearson was more than adequate.

Bernard Shaw, who lost most of his popularity by reason of his strong pro-German views during the late war, will add nothing to his reputation by "Augustus Does His Bit," a stupid and dull Shaw monologue, in which he rails at incompetents in the English army. Nothing could be less timely or in poorer taste than this one-act Shaw play, which was presented at the Comedy Theater by John D. Williams as a curtain raiser to "Toby's Bow." Time was when Shaw's dramatic tracts were rather amusing, but now his humor smacks of the ancient yellow-backed almanacs that once helped drive folks insane. Shaw, criticizing his own government and defending the Germans, is not an attractive Shaw.

New York has recently seen three glorious comic-opera revivals. They were "Robin Hood"—the most famous opera written by an American and Reginald de Koven's greatest popular success—"The Bohemian Girl," and "Patience." This last-named comic opera is as sparkling as of yore. The lines are wittier than anything from our modern humorists, and the lilting music fairly sweeps you off your feet. This opera, which Gilbert & Sullivan wrote as a satirical protest against the æsthetic

movement of Oscar Wilde, when sun-flowers and lilies typified real art, is as robust as if it were written yesterday. William Danforth as *Reginald Bunthorne*, the materialistic poet, was uproariously funny. Bunthorne is the Doctor Frank Crane of poetry. Bertram Peacock as *Archibald Grosvenor*, the idyllic poet, was equally funny and sang about the "greenery-yallery, Grosvenor Gallery, foot-in-the-grave young man" delightfully. It is in "Patience" that the lines occur: "I am not fond of uttering platitudes in stained-glass attitudes." One might have thought that W. S. Gilbert had a certain famous American political leader in mind when he wrote that.

These operas are produced by the Society of American Singers, of which William Wade Hinshaw is president. This is the second season. During the first season, the society produced Mozart's "The Impresario," Donizetti's "The Night Bell," Pergolesi's "Maid Mistress," and Gounod's "The Mock Doctor." This second season it has pro-

duced, since September 23d, "Mignon," "Daughter of the Regiment," "Carmen," "Tales of Hoffmann," "Madame Butterfly," "Martha," "Fra Diavolo," "The Mikado," "Pirates of Penzance," "Pinafore," "The Gondoliers," and two operas by American composers—"Bianca," by Henry Hadley, which won the thousand-dollar prize offered by Mr. Hinshaw for the best one-act opera by an American composer, and "Robin Hood."

The Society of American Singers is to be congratulated for making such a great success of these revivals. There are no attractions in New York that I could more heartily recommend to readers of AINSLEE'S. They are in English, and it is English that can be understood—something that is a rare feat in these days of slovenly diction.

Jacques Copeau's repertoire company at the Vieux Colombier made two notable productions in French during the month under review—"La Veine," a modern comedy by Alfred Capus, and "Le Misanthrope" of Molière.

Statement of the Ownership, Management, etc., required by the Act of Congress of August 24, 1912, of AINSLEE'S, published monthly, at New York, N. Y., for April 1, 1919:

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Before me, a Notary Public, in and for the State and County aforesaid, personally appeared George C. Smith, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is Treasurer of Street & Smith Corporation, publishers of AINSLEE'S, and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24, 1912, embodied in section 443, Postal Laws and Regulations, to wit:

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Talks With Ainslee's Readers

NEXT month we shall begin publication of a new serial, entitled "The Joyous Dreamer," by Vennette Herron. It has to do with the adventures of a delightful philanderer, who ensnares the hearts of women because he knows how to be charmingly indifferent. He is freebooter and poet at one and the same time, a knight of romance who goes through the world taking love as a natural right, wherever he finds it. Richard is his name. He is certain to interest you, though you may sometimes be indignant with him. Miss Herron, his creator, is the author of "When Sirens Clash" and "Lolita," two novelettes which have pleased you in recent issues. We asked her to tell you something about herself, and the following is the character sketch she sent us.

I WAS born in the United States, and during the early years of my life traveled over a goodly portion of this country with my father, Doctor George D. Herron, who frequently took me with him on his lecture tours.

"Since then I have wandered and adventured in various parts of the world, but most of my time has been spent in South America. I loathe cold and austerity and am never quite alive or contented outside of the tropics. My happiest and most eventful days were those spent in cruising down the west coast of South America and among some of the islands of the south Pacific in a sixty-foot gasoline cruiser. I have also taken many trips into the interior of Colombia and Panama on horseback. I hate games, but love fencing, hunting, riding, and yachting.

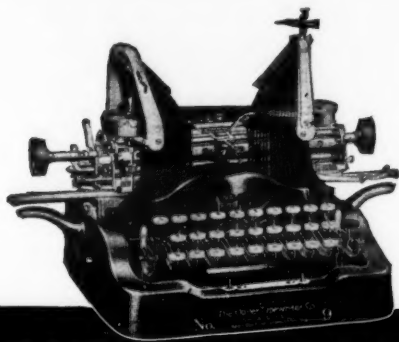
I have more lives than a cat, having lived through almost every conceivable accident—such as being shot at and stabbed, drowned to the point of unconsciousness, having my clothes burned off me, and being thrown from my horse on a bad trail. I have also been in a scrimmage with natives, have hunted tigers by torchlight in the jungle, and have been bitten by a variety of reptiles while orchid seeking.

"I adore wild animals, have played with baby lions and tigers and kept, at one time, at one of my homes in South America, a monkey, a wild dog, five cats, a deer, a parrot, twenty small birds, and a pony. I have played on the stage at various times. My first story was sold when I was seventeen years old."

THE complete novelette for July will be "The Ways They Loved Laura," by Randolph Bartlett. Intriguing title, isn't it? There were a number of men infatuated with the beautiful heroine—Phillip Brand, the playmate of her girlhood, who was eligible in every way; a painter who did her portrait and was a dear fellow, but hardly in the running financially; a rich man, who was willing to pay any price for her; and the Swadir of Nakahal, an Eastern potentate, who appeared at the psychological moment. The swadir furnishes a series of big surprises in this mystery novelette.

The short-fiction program includes "Now," by Charles Saxby, and "The Light," by Katherine Wilson; a highly original Spanish tale by Horace Fish, entitled "The Little Chasm Rose;" "The Invisible Barrier," by Du Vernet Rabell; and "The Door," by Nancy Boyd.

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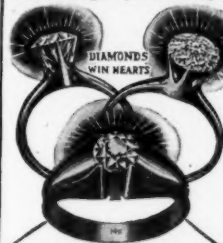
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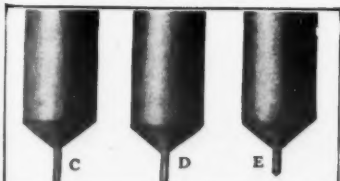
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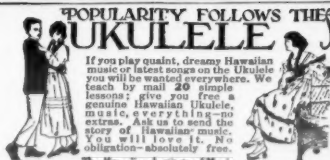
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